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## Science under indictment

By Max Perutz

LIEBE F. CAVALIERI:  
*The Double-Edged Helix*  
 190pp. Columbia University Press.  
 \$19.50.  
 0 231 053061

Every profession harbours some embittered individuals who blame their disenchantment on its prostitution by their colleagues. This book is written by such a man, who presents moral imperatives, lofty sentiments, truths, half-truths, distortions and self-contradictions all rolled together into a fanatical polemic: against America's leading molecular biologists; against genetic engineering; against the freedom of science, as well as the alleged regimentation of science by administrators and its exploitation by a new, commercially motivated scientific elite; against the National Academy of Sciences of the USA and its president, who is seen as no more democratic than a czar; against the Pill, the motor car, agrochemicals, food additives, pharmaceuticals, antibiotics, big business and Nobel Prizes. It is not Society and the Environment and for those scientists who share the author's views, though he fails to mention the awkward fact that one of them is also a Nobel Laureate.

The polemic against genetic engineering forms the heart of the book. This subject started in 1973 when scientists found ways of cutting the chromosomes of any organism, including man's, into small fragments, some containing only one or a few genes. The genes can then be incorporated into bacteria or yeast. Growth of these micro-organisms amplifies the genes and allows them to be isolated in chemically pure form. The micro-organisms containing them can be turned into factories to produce substances which they would not normally make, such as human insulin or proteins from which vaccines can be prepared. The discoverers of the new techniques feared that bacteria that live in the human gut could acquire cancer virus genes or be fabricated into virulent new micro-organisms against which we have no defence. These concerns led to the formulation of safety guidelines for genetic manipulation. Experiments were classified according to a rough scale of risks, and precau-

tions recommended accordingly. In the United States compliance was voluntary, though for government-sponsored research non-compliance would have been punished by withdrawal of the grant. In Britain this was true to begin with, but since the passing of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974, non-compliance can lead to prosecution.

Because the United States has no Federal law similar to that Act, demands arose there that safety regulations for genetic manipulation should be made statutory. The demands came to a head just when molecular biologists were beginning to regard many of their initial fears as exaggerated and favoured relaxing the guidelines rather than having them codified into law. The scientists therefore resisted and eventually defeated the introduction of such legislation. Cavalieri's book centres on the accusation that this was done by a powerful élite of commercially motivated scientists, who manipulated scientific information and the rest of the scientific community for their own ends, and deceived Congressmen into believing that the potential benefits of genetic engineering outweighed its risks. I do not regard these accusations as justified. In the United States lobbying is part of the normal democratic process. In the debate about genetic engineering both sides had their say but it was the emotional appeals of its opponents rather than the more sober assessments of its supporters that captured the media. If Congress decided not to hamstring the scientists' work by rigid legislation, it did so for good reasons. While it is true that some of the genetic engineers have commercial as well as scientific interests at stake, most of them want to use the techniques for bio-medical research on topics such as the chemical basis of inherited diseases, the mechanism by which cancer viruses infect mammalian cells, or the ways by which we make antibodies that protect us from disease. Cavalieri mentions none of this work. He discounts, perhaps rightly, claims that genetic manipulation may lead to a cure for cancer, but he conceals the fact that it has already led to striking progress in discovering how certain viruses induce cancer. A solution of this problem is vitally important: for instance it now looks as though

primary cancer of the cervix of the uterus may be caused by a virus; primary cancer of the liver, one of the most common cancers in the Third World, is now known to be associated with persistent infection with hepatitis B virus. Genetic manipulation has made it possible to dissect the chromosome of the hepatitis virus and to attempt to use certain of its genes for the fabrication of a vaccine, so that this disease might disappear just as polio did. Genetic engineering has also made possible the antenatal diagnosis of certain inherited diseases. Cavalieri dismisses such diseases as too rare to justify the risks involved, but this is incorrect. For instance, in Ferrara and other towns in the Po Valley, two out of every hundred children are born with a crippling anaemia (thalassaemia) whose causes have now been pinpointed by genetic manipulation.

Much of the author's polemic derives from the assumption that all commercial interests are inherently evil. He mentions companies that are trying to manufacture insulin and human growth hormone, and argues that there is no real need for these. It is true that present supplies of insulin made from animal pancreases are sufficient, but there have been shortages when some of the six million American diabetics have become alarmed at the possibly harmful effects of anti-diabetic pills and taken more insulin instead. If meat continues to get dearer, people will eat more cereals and diabetics will therefore need more insulin. Hence pharmaceutical firms are wise to look for alternative sources of supply. Cavalieri does not mention that companies are also trying to make interferon as a possible anti-viral and anti-cancer drug, nor that they are trying to make vaccines against influenza, foot-and-mouth disease and other illnesses against which remedies or effective and cheap vaccines are not now available.

Molecular biologists no longer regard the manipulations involved in such research as too risky, because they have developed bacteria so enfeebled as not to be able to survive in the human gut, and because man-made modifications as such tend to reduce the virulence of micro-organisms so that they cannot com-

pete with wild-type strains under natural conditions and therefore die out. The danger of producing a virulent new organism that would persist in nature is therefore regarded as remote, compared to the potential benefits of better defences against known disease-producing bacteria and viruses.

What about the long-term risks of developing methods that might one day be used to engineer deliberate modifications of man's genetic make-up? Cavalieri is not the first popular science writer to conjure up Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Indeed, if the pronouncements of certain eminent biologists quoted in the book are to be believed, Cavalieri has a good case. For instance, Aldous Huxley's brother Julian preached the need for "a global evolutionary policy." . . . Eventually, the prospect of radical eugenic improvements could become one of the main springs of man's evolutionary advance.

Joshua Lederberg, a geneticist who now presides over the Rockefeller University in New York, said, "... it would be incredible if we did not soon have the basis of developmental engineering techniques to regulate, for example, the size of the human brain by pre- or early post-natal intervention". I should have thought that phrenology, the science which George Eliot used to admire because it linked people's intelligence simply to the size of their brain, had long since been discredited. J. B. S. Haldane, geneticist and champion of Marxism, suggested that scientists fulfil their social responsibility by cloning out-standing individuals (such as geneticists?). He failed to consider that the benefits of propagating his brilliant intelligence might be outweighed by the risk of propagating his notorious temper. In a clone of identical brethren that combination might have led to wholesale fratricide.

Cavalieri rightly observes that eugenics rests on the untenable assumption of infinite wisdom and prescience on our part, but he might also have quoted Peter Medawar's demonstration that eugenics is scientifically unsound, because the human genetic make-up is too complex for any characters to be bred true. I regard Huxley's and Lederberg's statements as no more than enthu-

siasms which might equally well have been issued by a firm of advertising agents, because we have as yet no idea what determines any mental attribute such as intelligence, courage or musical talent. Typically, scientists who want to know how the brain works measure the electrical impulses that issue from a frog's eye when it sees a fly pass, or they try to detect what nerves are excited in a monkey's brain when he sees a bar of light move from left to right. They do not know what determines the development of the brain or of any other organ, nor how the brain works even in the simplest animal, let alone in man. How then are we to acquire "the basis of development engineering techniques" to regulate the size of the human brain? If eminent biologists stopped talking through their hats they would arouse less hostility in their subject.

Cavalieri pleads for the responsible use of science by scientists and technocrats, and complains that no social mechanism has ever been established to ensure the thoughtful, "humanistic" (I suppose he means humane) application of human discoveries. Has he never heard of our National Health Service, which is a splendid example of just such a mechanism? Cavalieri envisages a committee of responsible citizens to consider the results of research and their possible consequences, and recommend appropriate public policies. He cites the motor car as one of the evil results of technology because it kills 40,000 Americans a year. To follow his argument to its logical conclusion, suppose that a hundred years ago Cavalieri's committee had decided that the risks of the internal combustion engine outweighed its benefits and had induced governments world-wide to forbid its further development: would the committee also have foreseen that the introduction of elementary hygiene and sanitation would lead to an enormous increase in the world's population and that these multitudes would not be able to be fed without mechanized agriculture and transport? The assessment of the benefits and risks of technological innovation can be as difficult as those of eugenics.

What of some of Cavalieri's other accusations against science and tech-

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nology? He alleges that "the 1.2 billion dollars spent on cancer research in 1977 represents in a large part a search for some means to patch up the damage caused by environmental factors, including industrial and food additives." In support he quotes a statement by Sir Richard Doll, the medical epidemiologist, that most, if not all, cancers have environmental causes and can therefore in principle be prevented. Doll, however, defines "environmental" as meaning the air we breathe, the food we eat and the things we come into daily contact with, but without implying that those factors that cause cancer are necessarily man-made - a distinction that the author has failed to grasp. Tobacco smoke, which is the largest single cause of cancer in Britain and the United States, is an artefact, but aflatoxin, the most potent cancer-producing chemical known and a frequent cause of cancer in the tropics, is the product of a natural mould that infects crops stored in warm humid places. In parts of rural China cancer of the oesophagus is the most frequent single cause of death in men over fifty. Its origin is obscure. Industrial pollution and chemical food additives are unknown there. Cancer of the bowel affects Western populations with a high intake of meat and cancer of the stomach afflicts Eastern people living mainly on rice, but there is nothing to suggest that either of these cancers is due to artificial food contaminants. Cavalieri's environmental hypochondria is epitomized by his rhetorical question, "Have you ever felt unwell without a known cause?", as though the human body were a perfect machine that misfired only when the man at the petrol pump filled it with noxious fuel.

In a long tirade against agrochemicals and genetic engineering designed to raise crop yields, Cavalieri tells us that the world now produces enough grain to feed everyone adequately. This is true now, at least as far as cereals go, but it is estimated that by 1985 the world's annual grain shortage will be forty-five million tonnes, equal to half the present American grain surplus. He deplores the waste involved in feeding grain to animals in Western societies, but seems unaware of the much greater waste of grain due to pests which spoil about half the world's crops, and in some countries an even higher percentage; much of this waste could be prevented by chemical pesticides.

"The pill", Cavalieri writes, "is clearly a societal demand being both created and met by technology. Saturation advertising has created questionable personal priorities. . . . The so-called demands made by science on society are in part demands created by commercial interests through modulation and control of the collective will." What a loud of Marxist verbiage! I am not aware of the pill having been advertised to the public. News of it got around and women asked their doctors to prescribe it. Its most widespread use is in China, where commercial interests do not exist.

Cavalieri maintains that the subjugation of the environment is the major catastrophe of our time and deplores the loss of freedom to

breathe clean air or drink clean water. In Britain, at any rate, the air has become much cleaner than it was at the beginning of the century, when half the children of Manchester had rickets because they rarely saw the sun and where one kilogram of soot fell on every square metre each year. When I look at medieval castles where the smoke from domestic fires escaped through a hole in the roof I count myself lucky that my house has chimneys. As to our water, Prince Albert died in 1861 of typhoid fever contracted from a contaminated well in Windsor Castle. I see no such danger threatening Prince Philip and I believe that most of us are better protected from contaminated air and water than our forefathers were.

We are told that nowadays "the scientist rarely has the opportunity to pursue the research of his choice in whatever direction it may lead; the privilege is out of date." Instead, he has to buckle under to mission-oriented work dictated to him by the Office of Management and the Budget. This was a curious statement to read on the day I received a special issue of *Nature* filled with American papers about the rings and moons of Saturn. Cavalieri's lament is a caricature of American science, whose freedom, brilliance, dynamism and fertility are the envy of the world. He contradicts it by his own demand that "science, as well as technology, requires a certain amount of societally oriented guidance at this point in history." Where is such guidance to come from if not from the officials of a democratically elected government?

Today, he tells us, "a scientist knows beforehand that his ideas will be exploited." I have often wished that some of my ideas and discoveries were of the kind that could be exploited and have not given up hope that one day they may be. Not all exploitation is done by the Satans of Big Business.

I agree with Cavalieri when he writes: "In the search for knowledge you have to ask what you will do with the knowledge once you have gained it", but in practice you don't know what you will find, and once you have found and published new knowledge, it is open for use or abuse by anyone in the world. "In a technocracy everybody is resigned to the fact that if something can be done, it will be done." This reflects my own sentiments when Edwards and Steptoe announced their method of fertilizing human eggs in the test tube, but I have since overcome my objections, because the technique has helped childless couples; so far it has not given rise to malformed babies, nor does it seem likely that it will lead to people destined for grades alpha to epsilon being bred in the incubators of Aldous Huxley's *Hatchery and Conditioning Centre*. Cavalieri proclaims, "It is unjust to impose irreversible changes on future generations." I agree, but I regard it as unjust to accuse the molecular biologists of planning to do this, rather than the physicists who are devoting their talents to the refinement of thermonuclear bombs.

To me molecular biology has provided a thirty-year-long procession of wonderful revelations about the chemical basis of life. Just when it seemed to be coming to an end, genetic manipulation opened grand new vistas of discovery. How sad to find a scientist in whom they merely evoke bitterness and cynicism. Cavalieri's book will be widely read and believed by laymen. Those interested in the true state of the subject will find balanced and authoritative accounts of the applications of genetic engineering to medicine, agriculture and industry in the September 1981 issue of the *Scientific American*.

The fifth volume in the annual series *Studies in History of Biology* edited by William Coleman and Camille Limoges (200pp, Johns Hopkins University Press, £0.80/£2.56) contains extensive articles by Stephen J. Cross, of the Department of the History of Science, Johns Hopkins University; John R. Huxley, the Animal Development and Plant Biology Department, University of Cambridge; and Timothy Lender, of the Department of History, University of Arizona. The *Göttingen School* and the *Development of Transcendental Nature* philosophies in the Romantic Era



A detail of the decorated underside of the Stragorov box, a gold snuff-box engraved and nielloed on all sides with amorous scenes and figures in hunting costume. The snuff-box, which was made about 1770, is said to have been presented to Catherine the Great by Count Alexander Sergeevich Stragorov (1733-1811), one of the Empress's closest advisers and a collector and patron of the arts. The fashion for snuff-boxes as decorative objects which were often presented to retiring foreign ministers was at its height in Russia by the end of the eighteenth century. The influence of the French masters becomes apparent during the reign of Catherine II, who travelled widely and bought collections in Paris. The picture is taken from Russian Gold and Silver by Alexander von Solodkov (1939) pp 245 plates. Trefoll Books, £15. 0 86294 004 4, which describes in detail over 200 examples of the art of the Russian gold and silversmith from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. The book also covers the organization of the goldsmith's trade in Russia, stylistic influences on the goldsmith's art, materials, techniques and typical objects, gold and silver marks, important centres of the art, masters, workshops and firms.

## The poet and his camera

By Edwin Morgan

YEVGENY YEVYUSHENKO:

*Invisible Threads*  
157pp, Secker and Warburg, £9.95  
(hbk £12.81, £12.50 thereafter).  
0 436 59220 7

This handsomely produced and attractive book is largely a collection of photographs taken by Yevyushenko, some 130 in black and white and thirty in colour. A dozen poems and an interesting introduction preface the collection, and in addition the photographs are all captioned with a note indicating where they were taken, and usually a short poem or a piece of prose written about them, as explanation or as comment or as imaginative contemplation of the image. The bulk of the translation is by Paul Fella and Natasha Ward, though Ted Hughes and Arthur Boyers did one poem each. The translations do not reproduce rhyme and metre, but with that important proviso they are efficient and readable.

It is very clear from the prefatory poems, from the introduction and from the dedication to Edward Steichen, that this is a book with a purpose. In the introduction, Yevyushenko says what a revelation he found Steichen's *The Family of Man* photographs at the American Exhibition in Moscow in 1957. They were "like a gigantic poem by Whitman, written not in words but with a camera. Through Steichen's photography, the invisible threads binding one nation to another had been made visible." The impact of Steichen's images of real people from different countries seemed to shatter the abstract clichés of the Cold War. When he saw that his own poetry was aiming at a wide audience, and especially at people who were not normally poetry readers, he was natural step for Yevyushenko to take up photography.

With its potential as an international language. Helped by professional photographers, he learned as much as he could about the craft, and then, in his wide-ranging travels, endeavoured to use it and poetry as a double-armed assault on the divisions and distrusts and oppressions of "the family of man". Not land-scape but the human figure, especially the human face, was his target, and in the pursuit of it he has been pelted with rotten potatoes by women in Hong Kong, seized as a shy in his own home country.

Siberia, and hit with an empty Pepsi-Cola bottle by an irate prostitute in Sydney. The family of man does not always take kindly to the idea of being recorded.

A few of the photographs have a straightforward beauty that scarcely needs any added comment: a horse with startling blond mane cropping grass; a girl's head seen through the interlaced lozenges of a wall in Samarkand; Somerset's *leaves* is a documentary interest, which again seems to be mostly self-contained, as in a shot of Japanese pearl-divers with white masks, white diving suits and orange wooden tubs; a Moscow cheer-leader holding up a gaily curd of Polyanas verses for mass singing; a view of Zima Station in Siberia. Some images are strange, even bizarre: a man on a bench about to have his bare belly patted by a friend, a fur-hatted man leaning against a picture of Christ painted on a lane in Baku. Some are lucky shots that both make and call for comment: a crippled veteran under a wall of fluttering want ads, a boy like a young Napoleon caught as he pauses behind the Director-General's microphone at Unesco in Paris. And some, it must be said, are banal or too obviously message-bearing: most of the shots of London, many of the shots of children, two lovers embracing against a background of national flags.

The caption-poems, which are brief - even at times epigrammatic - vary in persuasiveness. At times they preach or merely spell out in verbal terms what the eye has already taken from the photograph; but many of them are able to use the pictures as imaginative or moving and only to be expressed in words. A joiner is preparing bamboo for the making of furniture, and the poem refers to the rare flowering of bamboo and pursues a fancy of blooms breaking through a completed table. The sharp little poem accompanying a portrait of Dolores Ibárruri, "La Pasionaria", asks sceptically whether she isn't really a "Join of Arc" whose "fired fire". A fine poem on Tamerlane's tomb in Samarkand is full of grim ironies and warnings. A shot of the village church in Peredelkino, where Pasternak used to go, has lines describing how at Easter

old women stand with willow-branches, and with strong dry stalks of wood. Which once, perhaps, were willow-branches too.

As the passage suggests, a feeling for

time, pervades many of the pictures and poems; as does, also, the sense of Yevyushenko's spotlighting of the ordinary, the anonymous, the unpraised. Typical is a photograph of a cleaner sweeping round the steps of a vast monument.

A woman with a mop, cleaning the steps of a famous general's monument. Does not realize her own work. Exceeds the world's whole aim of peace.

The book, as may readily be imagined, would be a salutary antidote for subscribers to the glossy magazine, who are the people most likely to be able to afford to buy it. It is full of haunting faces, of shopped woodcutters, gold-miners, miners, card-players, horse-trainers, the very old. But what about the Steichenishchina, it is true that the world is one? It is true that the laughing child, the woman at shopping, the workman with a shovel, are much the same whatever they are photographed, yet it is noticeable how often the photographs make one pause for something specific to one place or one thing. In one picture, a woman sitting on an orange-box, looking through thick ice in Moscow; an expensive astrakhan coat, an optic fox fur hat, gleaming boots, tinted glasses, painted fingers, a book, and a brace and bit for drilling the ice. Another woman, who looks to be the patroness of the Poles Bergère, stands in a leather coat, shaped like a birdcage in her kempt country garden. In a number of stances, and in a fair number of others, the eye of the photographer has obviously fastened on something rather than rules, and enjoyed doing so.

Yevyushenko's theme of the yearning for peace and harmony, for a globe without frontiers, for a strong feeling of the "invisible threads" binding one nation to another, is a theme which speaks of, in a world where a taste on the cheek, a snowflake on the nose, a dream of Eskimo, is a dream of everyman and poetry, however, (and one may add science) provide evidence of diversification may be a good thing. The descendants of the family of man, if Olaf Stapledon has been in *Last and First Men*, have been grain of truth, may scarcely realize their parent stock. I have not a backhanded compliment to Yevyushenko to say that he forcefully stimulates

STEVIE SMITH:

Me Again  
Uncollected Writings. Edited by Jack Barbura and William McBrien  
360pp, Virago £9.95.  
0 85068 217 X

"Beckford is an author who should not be followed home." So begins Stevie Smith's *Observer* review of *Life at Fonthill*, an edition and translation (he wrote in Italian) of the correspondence of William Beckford, published in 1957. A great admirer of *Valer*, as one might expect, Stevie Smith takes a brisk line with Beckford's personal life and habits:

Just now it is usual to have books indulging sodomites. In "Lord Byron's Marriage" Mr. Wilson Knight seems almost to draw our Lord into their company and hints that normal sexuality is a bar to eminence in the arts. I suppose no one will ever be able to make a true equation between vice, virtue, and art, and why try? . . . Oh leave it, leave it, one feels. Read the stories and poems the sinners write, but leave their private lives (as we should like our own sinning lives to be left) to heaven. So one feels. One may be wrong.

That is a good instance of Stevie Smith's reviewing style, as well as of her views on the biographical question. One may be wrong. But one is probably right. She was so very distinct an individual, so absolute a literary personality. In another rather sharp and sensible review, of Simone Weil, she remarks on the truth of the old saying: *les nautes profondément baines sont toujours indécises*, but says of Weil, "She was seldom undecided". So was Stevie. She was sceptical, but she was very definite indeed. And yet, one feels, good.

Going with that very definite personality in everything she wrote, revealing with apparent artlessness her joys and sorrows, prejudices and beliefs, is the actual and total privacy of her life. She invites us to feel at home with her but not to follow her there. Nor does it matter in the least, in terms of her self-presentation, whether she was "good" or not: she would have been amused by all the ways the word is used. Whether being looked after by her aunt or looking after her (a letter notes that she preferred the latter), having or not having an affair with George Orwell (a friend assured her friend James MacGibbon that she did, but he is inclined to agree with Orwell's biographer Bernard Crick that she didn't), she seemed incapable of the kind of multiple act of imaging one's life, or having it imaged by others, that supply the real right stuff of biography. We can never hear enough of some writers, or Stevie's friend Rosamond Lehmann (whose name she always wrote "Rosamund"). But the very ease with which we treat her, and she treats us, means that a biography is beside the point. As her executor, James MacGibbon, remarks: "What is there to record that has not already been expressed in her writings? . . . Me again is tantamount to an autobiographical profile. Some of the letters and reviews reveal her attitudes to poetry and religion with an authenticity that no biographer could have achieved."

That is certainly true. The impression of Stevie Smith in this book is overwhelming, almost too much so: it is not so much a question of her putting a head round the door and trilling Whoopee here I am again, as of plunging herself down in one's lap. That is an impression she would not have wished to make. She was not only an intensely professional writer but a sort of Parnassian whatever contrary impression the idiom of her poems may give. Her sweetest songs were those which by saddest thought, but tell of it by odd contraries. As she wrote to her friend John Hayward during the war:

I have been reading a lot of Somerset Maugham just now, and that is the sort of writing I admire. It is so controlled and cool, he has learnt what to do with private feelings, they are to be worked and worked and worked and never used in the slub, they are nothing but raw material for the writer to work into shape. I think Olivia Manning has this quality.

In the same letter she remarks that her novel *Over the Frontier* was "nothing to be proud of", and that "Novel on Yellow Paper" just happened to come off, it had a sort of light-heartedness and the scraped it through. One would not dissent from those judgments, nor with what she says about her muse - "how I wish my muse would not only respond to the disagreeable and sad, because I nearly always feel agreeable and happy, and then - never a word, Muse velly dumb, but as soon as anything goes wrong the old girl gets going." Poetry, she says, in a little essay called "My Muse", "is very strong and never has any kindness at all. All it has to do is to make a strong communication".

"The human creature is alone in his carapace. Poetry is a strong way out." Discussing in a letter to John Hayward the reason why she needed so much to write, she told him "it's not the fame, dear, it's the company."

The originality of her poems seems like isolation made visible. They are childish in the sense in which Henry James's children are childish, little images of dispossessed childhood, a quality all their own. Like such children she is never on the Side of Life, but of the fatigue which for many people is the only way of making a success of it. This even gets into theology, which she took such a zealous interest in, and produces some unusual conjunctions, like the dialogue of Eve, who wants to be nothing, and Mary who loves life.

They walked by the estuary, Eve and the Virgin Mary, And they talked until nightfall, But the difference between them was radical.

That comes from a piece called "Too tired for Words" ("The difference between the person who is too tired for words and the person who is not is radical. And there does not seem to be anything that anyone can do about it"). In which we learn that Stevie was once told by a doctor: "Your whole life is a failure". That must have given her pleasure. "Tell someone that", she writes, "and he will begin to think the dangerous thoughts of a little child I wrote about. This child stands in his flannel sleeping suit beside his bed and he is saying to himself these two lines: 'If I lie down upon my bed I must be here, but if I lie down in my grave I may be elsewhere.' Characteristic lines that are worth listening and digesting with care, and maybe putting beside Philip Larkin's poem on 'The Importance of Elsewhere'."

From the admirable introduction by Jack Barbura and William McBrien - in itself a wholly adequate substitute for any biography - we learn that Sylvia Plath much admired Stevie's poems. The letter Plath wrote, which is quoted, is touching in its simple wish for contact and comfort. She was hoping, in November 1962, to move with her babies to a London flat

and would be very grateful in advance to hear if you might be able to come to it or come when I manage my move - to cheer me on a bit. I've wanted to meet you for a long time. Sincerely, Sylvia Plath.

It was not to be, however; Sylvia Plath killed herself three months after writing the letter. Stevie wrote a rather inert little poem called "Mabel", published here for the first time, which may or may not be about this sad event. One feels it is not likely the two could have got on, and the poem seems by mistake to tell us why: for to Stevie loneliness was the source of all humour - the great passive principle; and to Sylvia Plath the source of all drama - the great active one. But no doubt they might

have got on simply as women in the same boat.

From the editors' unobtrusive annotations to Stevie's letters we learn that she herself attempted suicide at the office in 1953, a month or two after writing "Not Waving but Drowning", which she placed with *Punch*, bizarrely enough the most devoted customer in those days for her poetry. "Seriously, *Punch* is nice for us girls now it has got Male Muggidge and Tony Powell more or less running it." The poem has become, alas, her "Lake Isle of Innisfree", and gives no indication at all of how subtle and beautiful the sheer density of her poetry is (particularly in *Harold's Leap*, the preceding collection) but all the same it would be nice to have a copy of the issue in which it first appeared. The critic would have to admit that in general there is a difference, and a disconcerting one, between the poems of Stevie Smith that "come off" and the ones that don't; but some none the less can come off too well, too obviously, like the one in the present volume which ends "But I forgive you Maria/Kindly remember that." Most of the poems here, though, are aborted pieces which their author would hardly have wished to see in print.

Stevie had frequent libel problems, particularly where her stories were concerned, for she tended to base these on a transcript of days or weekends spent with friends. Reminiscent of the sort of thing that used to appear in the wartime *Penguin New Writing*, these are not her strong point: "Beside the Seaside" is probably the best of the ten pieces "all of the stories which we know to exist", say the editors) included in this volume. "One has to be careful with these transcripts from life I suppose" she writes to John Hayward, and she asked his advice about a poem called "Goodnight", which she wrote about a married couple.

She wrote about a married couple.

By Douglas Dunn

PATRICK WILLIAMS:

*Trails*  
44pp, Sidgwick and Jackson, £3.50.  
0 283 98724 3

"Many people say that the important thing is to advance; I think rather that the important thing is not to retreat." Thus the French essayist Alain in his book *Elements d'une Doctrine Radicale* (1925). A similar mood is beginning to appear in contemporary poetry. That is, the urgency of "make it new" has been replaced by a moment of creative stasis within which individual originality assumes a greater degree of importance than any large programme involving shifts of style or revolutionary techniques. The notion of free verse has given way to the perhaps more liberating ideal of the free poem.

Patrick Williams, yet another gifted newcomer from the North of Ireland, shares with his better known countrymen their secure if defensive elegance of style. Larkin's influence is apparent too, as well as that of Michael Longley, James Simmons, and, in his laconic manner, Seamus Heaney. More to the point though is Williams' consistently interesting and critical relationship with the community he comes from. As much as any other factor, it is that creative engagement with what Seamus Heaney endorses as the parochial, in its true sense, that helps to explain the persistent excellence of recent Northern Irish writing.

Williams' attitude to his people is not without its favour of alienation, bewilderment and irritation. "The Estate in Summer" posits a working-class poet's typical hand-wringing, albeit with wit.

friends of hers. They used to sit late in Stevie's room, apparently reluctant to withdraw into spousality, and the husband once made in her presence a heartlessly though mildly obscene remark to his wife about the dog's behaviour with her.

I yawned. Miriam and Horlick said Goodnight. And went. It was 2 o'clock and Miriam was quite white. With sorrow. Very well then, Goodnight.

Though she was adept at hitting off daily dolefuls like this, and especially those concerning "the woe that is in marriage", the solitary fancy of her muse does not soar in such a context. Much more memorable is the cry of the wife in "Lightly Bound" - "You beastly child I wish you had miscarried/You beastly husband I wish I had never married". Things were different in 1936, but perhaps it was their critical sense that led John Hayward and Rupert Hart-Davis to advise its omission from a collection of hers, rather than the fact that "Goodnight" might be thought obscene (as she called it) or dangerously close to an actual conversation.

Some of the poems will none the less have a special interest for the Stevie Smith addict, particularly a highly accomplished exercise in Miltonic, "Satan Speaks", which she wrote when hardly more than a schoolgirl, and a charming version in Lallans ("mixed speech" as she calls it) of the Sapphic fragment on lying alone, which she wrote in her copy of *Agenda* (Autumn 1966) beside Peter Whigham's version entitled "Loneliness". (It is typical, incidentally, that in reply to a suggestion that she should do some Sappho translations, she should have written: "I can't make head or tail of that ancient girl . . . one word sometimes tells the rest of the page occupied by learned commentaries and cross-references of the type 'But see Schickelgruber'."

arrival at identity by way of an episode from Williams's childhood. The narrative is handled discreetly enough, but his meditation on Ireland, and its character and troubles, while truthful, is guilelessly naked. There is something to be said for impersonality in tasteful quantities. Williams's narrative skills are abundant. What he might think of acquiring to go with them. Yet "Trails" is worth persevering with for its moving closure, proof enough that with Patrick Williams we have a poet whose future work deserves to be followed:

My trails to us have only just begun And questions ask one question answers But if the search is all there is, at least in you it has a base, almost a home.

The Piccadilly Festival 1981, at St James's Church, Piccadilly, is staging the first ever continuous reading of the works of William Blake in St James's, the church where Blake was baptized. The full programme, "A Day and a Night in the Life of William Blake", will run from 7.30pm on Tuesday November 10 until 12 midnight on Wednesday November 11. The 80-odd pages of the Penguin Collected Blake will form the basis of the text; admission to the reading, which, it is calculated, will last 28 hours, will be 75p.

Williams, possibly overdoes his melancholy, as in "A Marriage", or "Morning". In the latter poem a closing attempt at hope or affirmation reads like an unconvincing afterthought, given the morbid relish of the opening lines. A poetry like his, however, which is one of experience and testimony, of insight earned through suffering, does run the risk of its own openness. "Trails", the most impressive poem in the collection, is not entirely immune to that kind of criticism. It describes an

The moon has given her light an' gan The starses eek are flec Upon this bett in directer nich' Ah lane ah lee

Like most born poets Stevie was an accomplished paviachour, and this appears also in the haunting last lines of "Marriage I think" one of the best of these leftover poems. She sighs for the man that went and the thoughts that stay To trouble her dreams by night and her dreams by day.

Like most good poets she was a penetrating critic, too, not of poetry only but of any kind of book, for she had a catholic taste and wrote for a great variety of periodicals, including *Eire's Journal*, *Albion*, and even an aeronautes magazine. A good example of her perceptiveness is her comment on *Murder in the Cathedral*. It is not the argument, the wit or the piety which tell in it, she says, "but the fear and horror it becks in, and from fear and horror it draws its sap".

I do not mean that he may not believe what he argues, only that he does not make us as sure that he believes as he makes us sure that he feels, and especially that he feels disgust and enjoys feeling disgust and indulges this feeling with the best of his poetry.

That is a sound intuition, for she understood herself, and in her own work, how little the enjoyment at the heart of creation need be related to anything respectable. In her poetry she indulged herself, an indulgence that never precluded the sharpest possible awareness, both of her own case and that of others. This makes her view of religion particularly interesting, at once too fascinated and too full of commonsense to be satirical. Reading the talk she wrote in 1968 on "Some Impediments to Christian Commitment" one would love to know what she would say about the progress through public relations of our holy men of the media today.

## A free poet in the parish

Do they know that I'm against them on their side. That what I do is half for their sake, How hard it is for a druid with a headache?

In "Home" he writes that "Everywhere everywhere I've been/Limps a little, here they limp a lot." Mordant observation - a lot less demeaning than simple contempt - is Williams's stock-in-trade. "But here", he adds, "the disability has something in common with my own." And just as Seamus Heaney converted his father's peat-pede to a pen, to "dig with it", Williams says that he needs his place, "To sit, to pare the crutch down for a pen."

Yet his poetry of place is not without its banality. "Because it teaches us to die/We love and hate where we were born" is a ponderous, metronomic piece of soothing, unusual in a collection where a measured lucidity is the norm. He moves easily from relaxed, unrhymed pentameters (as in his excellent, and bitter poem, "Trails") to free verse in short lines.

Nor is urban, small-town Ulster his only subject. Much of the book is made up of love elegies, a subject which elicits his best lyrical lines. Of a lost lover, he writes, "But I'll remember. When you left you left An emptiness. It opens with my arm." Love-writing as candid and direct as that is less common today than we might imagine.

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The Commonwealth Institute and the National Book League invite entries for the 1982 Commonwealth Poetry Prize. A prize of £500 is awarded annually for a first published book of poetry in English by an author from a Commonwealth country other than Britain; publishers are requested to submit titles published between July 1, 1981 and June 30, 1982 to: The Librarian (Poetry Prize), The Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High St, London W8, Great Britain.

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# Meeting the man of destiny

By Douglas Johnson

FRANÇOIS KERSAUDY:  
Churchill and De Gaulle  
476pp. Collins. £12.95.  
0 00 216328 4

It was Randolph Churchill who said that his father and de Gaulle were two giants of history, recognizing each other and speaking to each other from the very summits. For de Gaulle, Churchill was always the great artist of a great history. For Churchill, de Gaulle was always an impressive figure, unfortunately associated with the destiny of France, a country which he admired and loved.

But while this is all undoubtedly true, it is not the whole truth. During the war years it was Roosevelt who held Churchill's attention. The whole of Churchill's strategy in 1939 and 1940 was based on his conviction that Britain could win the war provided that America became a belligerent, and towards Roosevelt Churchill constantly behaved with an unyielding deference. In his old age de Gaulle was fascinated by the figure of Mao Tse-tung, the man who seemed to symbolize a country which was older than history itself. He was probably tempted by the prospect of a meeting with Mao which, if it had taken place, might well have appeared as the rendezvous of the last towering figures of modern times who would, from a great height, have contemplated the more puny figures of their contemporaries.

Thus, where Churchill and de Gaulle were concerned, neither represented for the other the model, or the culmination, of statesmanship and achievement. While Churchill, the older and the more sentimental of the two, probably did come to look back on his early association with de Gaulle as if it had existed in a sunlit atmosphere, this did not mean that his approach to de Gaulle, especially in the 1940s, escaped from the realistic appraisals of a statesman who was single-minded in his determination to defend his country, and win the war. De Gaulle, always a hard man, with more than his share of cynicism and suspicion, and with his essential conviction that every statesman must simply defend his national interests, certainly appreciated Churchill's qualities but he was never starry-eyed or romantic in this appreciation. However indulgent the one may have been to the other, however forcefully the memory of how they shared the great dramas of 1940 may have persisted, however eloquent these two masters of language may have been when they spoke about each other, the fact remains that their relationship was not successful and that Franco-British relations were not adequately or effectively studied during the years when these two men governed, or in de Gaulle's case claimed to govern, their respective countries.

François Kersaudy is probably mistaken therefore in approaching his subject with a degree of sentimentalism, although his readers will be glad that he has considered the relationship between these two witty and picturesque men as a source of entertainment and enjoyment. Without

falling into the slough of anecdote - a terrible temptation where de Gaulle and Churchill are being considered, whether separately or jointly - he has written wittily about these great men and has told a good story. The fact that many of his long and numerous quotations have already appeared elsewhere does not detract from the neat and rounded manner with which he describes the relationship between the two men. The only serious disappointment arises from his failure to consult the large quantity of documents available in the Public Record Office, many of which are vital in this context. He has read and made good use of the Cabinet papers, and has also made admirable forays into the collections of documents housed in France, Canada, the Netherlands, the United States and elsewhere; but he has not looked at all the diplomatic and military papers which Churchill saw and which influenced his ideas and attitudes towards de Gaulle. In the summer and autumn of 1940, Churchill was overruling those of his advisers who were hostile to de Gaulle. But as time went by, and especially after the United States entered the war, it was the civil servants together with certain Cabinet ministers who defended de Gaulle, while Churchill seriously envisaged the possibility of replacing him by some other Frenchman. It is possible to follow the reasoning which led to these two positions.

Kersaudy claims that Churchill probably knew about de Gaulle before he met him, since Reynaud had mentioned him and his writings about armoured vehicles in a conversation they had had in March 1938; unfortunately, no reference is given in the book to support this supposition. Otherwise, it is assumed that Churchill knew about de Gaulle's deployment of tanks in a recent battle, and that he had read the report to him in *The Times* of June 7, 1940, where he is described as being aggressively right-wing, intensely theoretical and fanatically committed to the mass employment of armoured vehicles. This would hardly have been a good introduction; and besides, Churchill had always been deeply convinced of the excellence of the French army, and his friendship with certain French generals, such as General Georges, would not have encouraged him to look favourably on this unruly and awkward junior officer.

We have no direct evidence concerning the impression which de Gaulle made on Churchill when they met in Downing Street on June 9. Thus nothing prepares the historian for the impression which Churchill gained of de Gaulle when he was to meet him in conference with the French government shortly afterwards. He reported back to the Cabinet that de Gaulle was young and vigorous and that he would probably replace Weygand as Commander-in-Chief should the existing French line of defence be broken. This mistaken view might well have had considerable consequences since when de Gaulle came to England on June 17 Churchill perhaps thought that he was greeting one of the most important officers of the French army, when in fact he was welcoming a largely unknown and junior general who was considered by his contemporaries to be a controversial

character with regrettable political ties. It is curious that François Kersaudy does not mention this episode and that he should rather pursue the unauthenticated story put about by Churchill that when he saw de Gaulle at the Prefecture in Tours, standing stolid and expressionless in the doorway, he said to him, in a low voice and in French, "l'Homme du destin". If he did say these words neither de Gaulle nor his aide-de-camp, Geoffroy de Courcel, who was standing next to the General, heard them. But he did speak to the Cabinet in glowing and precise terms about de Gaulle and this was probably the origin of an important misunderstanding. Kersaudy is quite right to point out that at Tours de Gaulle also misunderstood what was happening, since he arrived at the meeting when it was mid-way through and he thought that Churchill was ready to approve the prospect of a French armistice when he had earlier, in de Gaulle's absence, explained that it was unacceptable.

It is natural enough to pursue this relationship in a narrative. We see how de Gaulle asserted himself, in

spite of his weakness, his poverty, and the intrigues which his fellow-Frenchmen fomented against him, sometimes with timid support from certain Englishmen. There can be no question that he impressed everyone, just as he irritated and exasperated them. There can be no doubt too that he showed himself to be a master of negotiation, with a sense of purpose which often escaped his fellow negotiators who were more concerned with immediate objectives. This was a natural gift, since he had had little experience. His very aloofness, about which some of his compatriots complained, served him well, because he was constantly the centre of rumour. It is striking to see in the Foreign Office papers how varied were the different accounts which were passed on about his political ideas, attributing to him allegiance both to the extreme right and to the Popular Front. It would be interesting to know what appears in his personal file, not yet available for public inspection.

Had François Kersaudy adopted a more analytical approach, he might have reflected on the significance of

the agreements which were signed with him. Because of the uncertainty of the situation in France, the Gaulist movement was not recognized as a government. The agreement was with a committee, and with the leader of that committee, de Gaulle himself. Thus de Gaulle as an individual assumed considerable importance. All negotiations were with him, and as the Prime Minister showed a constant personal interest in him, other ministers felt that they too must have dealings with him. He became the focus for attention of the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, the Service ministries and the Treasury. It could almost be said that the British invented de Gaulle.

Not the least of Dr Kersaudy's qualities is the skill with which he negotiates the pitfalls of the many disputes on which Free France thrived. Had he been less tactful he might have mentioned among the reasons for de Gaulle's success, the mediocrity of some of his French rivals, and the amused, superior tolerance with which, in those days, the British used to view even the most difficult of Frenchmen.

## The fortunes of peace

By C. M. Woodhouse

ANTHONY SELDON:  
Churchill's Indian Summer  
The Conservative Government, 1951-55

667pp. Hodder and Stoughton.  
£14.95.  
0 340 25456 4

In the nature of things, Churchill's last administration (1951-55) was bound to be less glamorous than his first (1940-45). To many it seemed to be an anti-climax and a disappointment. His colleagues spent much of their time and energy trying to force the old man to retire, though it is unlikely that any of the missed opportunities would have been grasped if Eden had succeeded him in 1952 instead of 1955. Since so many of our current woes are said to have their roots in mismanagement a generation ago, it is worth asking how much of the blame can be laid at Churchill's door.

Anthony Seldon does not attempt a direct answer to this question, though one discreet reference to Mrs. Thatcher indicates his view that her administration will do a great deal more damage than Churchill's ever did. His judgment of Churchill is based rather on looking back at what he inherited than looking forward to what followed. He does not see Churchill's "Indian summer" as the prelude to a "winter of discontent".

Certainly he is right in refuting most of what was said at the time by both Labour and Conservative critics. Churchill's Labour opponents were proved grossly mistaken in representing him as a reactionary and a war-monger. They foolishly overlooked his record as a social reformer before the First World War and their adoption of the slogan "Whose finger on the trigger?" was a grave blunder, at least as serious as Churchill's own "Gestapo" speech in 1945. In fact Churchill's record in office was the complete reverse of what Labour propaganda anticipated. He extended and consolidated the welfare state, and his foreign policy was consistently aimed at reducing tension with the Soviet Union. It was the hope of achieving a summit meeting with Stalin on his successors that caused Churchill to postpone his resignation so many times. But equally he confounded his Conservative critics who thought him too old to carry the burden of office. Although his powers were declining towards the end, he was in fact absent through ill-health for shorter periods than Eden, his heir presumptive.

All this is very well argued by Mr Seldon. Apart from his convincing presentation of the case for regarding Churchill's last administration as the Conservatives' most successful period since the war, two other features of his book are striking. One is that he chose to complete it just before the date when, under the 30-year rule, the relevant documents in the Public Record Office would begin to become available for research. Although this decision is at first sight paradoxical, it is justified by the consideration that once the documents become available their volume will be so enormous that many years will have to be devoted to detailed monographs before a final assessment can be attempted at all. Seldon really had to choose between 1980 and 2000, and he chose right.

He has wisely relied on diaries, reminiscences, oral interviews, Hansard and the press. Practically everything he needed for his own chosen method of presentation is already available in one or other of these sources, without recourse to official documents. The oral material in particular will not be indefinitely available, as the PRO material eventually will.

This leads to the second striking feature of the book, which is his method of presentation. The title might at first sight suggest that this is just another compilation of anecdotes and reminiscences about the great man. But it is not. It is rather a methodical, and even monumental, examination of the machinery of government as it came into being under Churchill's last administration. There are large sections of the book in which Churchill is scarcely mentioned at all, though his style of government is always a powerful force in the background.

Seldon goes through the administration function by function, department by department, minister by minister, and even official by official. This was perhaps the first peace-time government under which there would have been any significant point in examining the personalities of the civil servants as well as the ministers. Perhaps the television series, *Yes, Minister*, could be regarded as part of the legacy of Churchill's last government. But it is curious that in spite of the rising power of the civil service, Seldon records constant criticism of "the poor state of inter-departmental co-ordination".

The explanation of this and other criticisms may be that Churchill's fertility in administrative innovation was not matched by his skill in choosing the coordinators. The introduction of "overlords" to supervise groups of departments was a notorious failure, largely for that reason.

To Churchill's credit, he was quick to abandon the idea when it failed. In this respect too he showed himself to be no bigoted reactionary. The only truly reactionary measure of his last years was the absurd re-establishment of the Home Guard. It was done to fulfil a pre-election promise; but another pre-election promise did not inhibit him from abandoning the equally reactionary plan to restore the University MPs.

There were other failures which were the obverse of Churchill's successes. Seldon rightly emphasizes the continuity of policy, both at home and abroad, from the years of coalition through the Labour government of 1945 to the new Conservative government.

The continuity was not Churchill's work alone; it was domestic policy it flowed from Butler's work at the Conservative Research Department, and in foreign policy from the mutual sympathy of Eden and Bevin. But in both cases there was a price to be paid for continuity. The dominant power of the Trade Unions today owes at least something to Churchill's determination to avoid confrontation at all costs. The decline of education and the escalation of public expenditure both owe something to Churchill's indifference or unwillingness to take painful decisions. A sentimental faith in the Commonwealth led not only to the fatal delay in joining the European Communities but also to the problems created by unlimited immigration.

These qualifications of the record are unavoidable. But Seldon's summing up is strongly favourable. "No government this century was able so to improve the country's fortunes from such a bleak starting point." Practically all the pessimistic predictions of 1951 were falsified by events. Churchill himself proved, despite his age, a strong Prime Minister whom his colleagues found it impossible to remove until he was ready to go; and despite his record in opposition, he proved himself a moderate and pragmatic administrator of his difficult inheritance.

The fact that the author's conclusions come after massive and systematic research does not mean that his book is pedantic or dull. Far from it. His writing has the vigorous style which comes from an efficient grasp of detail. More than a hundred pages of notes contain enough anecdotes to satisfy the most unacademic devotee of Churchilliana. Although Mr Seldon would no doubt disclaim any political bias, being descended from a Marxist grandfather, his book should be particularly welcome to the wetter Conservatives among whom he almost explicitly enjoys his hero.

## A witness from Dixie

By P. J. Parish

C. VANN WOODWARD (Editor):  
Mary Chesnut's Civil War  
New York: Yale University Press.  
£13.80.  
0 300 02459 2

ELISABETH MÜHLENFELD:  
Mary Chesnut:  
A Biography  
281pp. Louisiana State University Press. £12.  
0 8071 0852 9

"I wonder what my attraction was", Mary Chesnut confided to the pages of her journal in 1861, "for men did fall in love with me wherever I went." She has certainly continued to charm generations of historians of the Civil War, and in particular of the Southern Confederacy. She knew just about everybody who was anybody in the Confederacy, and she had the priceless knack of being in the right place at the right time. She also had an insatiable appetite for gossip, an ear for a good phrase, and a tongue like a razor. It is small wonder that her *Diary from Dixie* has been plundered by an army of historians for apt quotations, who have seized upon her property even more ruthlessly than Sherman's invading hordes in 1865.

Hitherto, historians have had to rely upon two very inadequate published versions of the diary. One of the editors of the first, published in 1905, was Isabella Martin, the friend to whom Mary Chesnut had entrusted her journals, who saw it as her duty to eliminate any material which she thought embarrassing or detrimental to the author, including, most notably, all her strictures on slavery. The second, and somewhat fuller version, first published in 1949, was edited by the novelist Ben Ames Williams, with a keen eye for its readability, but with inadequate respect for the canons of historical scholarship. Now at last we have the full, scholarly edition which has been so much needed. It has been well worth waiting for, and it is highly appropriate that it should be the work of the most distinguished of living Southern historians, C. Vann Woodward. He provides an illuminating introduction and excellent explanatory notes (a little too solemn, perhaps, for anyone who has read Mrs. Chesnut's more frivolous remarks). There is, too, a first-rate index, although the reader might also have found useful at the outset brief biographies of some of the leading characters. Through a combination of meticulous scholarship, literary sensibility, and profound respect for the work of a remarkable woman, he has succeeded in exposing the true nature of that work, without spoiling its quality or undermining its value.

It must be said however that *Diary from Dixie* is not a diary at all. (Professor Woodward has wisely chosen to abandon that title, which was not only inaccurate but unbecoming to the style and standing of the author.) Mrs Chesnut did indeed keep a journal at times during the Civil War, most regularly in its first year, and, again, in its closing stages, but she abandoned the journal completely for over a year from August 1862, and she kept it only fitfully at other times. The wartime journal was, the editor tells us, often sappy and disjointed, sometimes consisting of little more than lists of names and cryptic abbreviations, and with little or no attempt at style or continuity. The so-called *Diary*, now published virtually in full for the first time, was in fact written in the 1880s, in the last five years of Mrs. Chesnut's life, some twenty years after the events which she describes. The diary form is preserved as a literary device, but the finished work is really a memoir, or a series of personal reflections and recollections, based upon the wartime journals. Strictly speaking it is not a "finished work" at all, for it seems clear that Mary Chesnut intended to amend and edit her manuscript, had she lived to do so.

Professor Woodward makes clear in his introduction, and Elisabeth Mühlentfeld makes even clearer in her biography of Mrs. Chesnut, that the 1880s version is the product of very much more than a living-up-to-opera-

tion. Some passages from the 1860s journals were omitted in the 1880s rewriting - and many of these are inserted in parentheses in the Woodward edition. (They contain many of the most significant and pungent of Mrs Chesnut's critical observations.) Other passages from the journals were greatly expanded in the 1880s version, and much entirely new material added. But the rewriting went much further still. Third-person narrative is turned into dialogue, her own thoughts are often put into the mouths of others, and meetings, conversations and incidents are rearranged to achieve a heightened effect. Professor Mühlentfeld is particularly illuminating in tracing Mary Chesnut's literary apprenticeship through her two unpublished novels and other shorter pieces written in the post-war years. She even shows, for example, how a dialogue passage from one of the novels was worked into the rewriting of the "journals".

The combined literary and historical scholarship of Mühlentfeld and Woodward suggests that Daniel Aaron was even nearer the mark than he could have imagined when he suggested in 1973, in *The Unwritten War*, that Mary Chesnut was "the most likely candidate to write the unwritten Confederate novel". Earlier, in *Partisan Gore*, published in 1962, Edmund Wilson perceived that she had "a decided sense of the literary possibilities of her subject", and he described the "diary" as, "in its informal department, a masterpiece". Informal it may be, but, as is now abundantly clear, it is neither an unconscious nor an accidental work of art. Its literary merit, which is considerable, derives from years of hard work, painstaking attention to style and technique, and a richly stocked mind - for Mrs Chesnut was a prodigious reader, with the most catholic of tastes.

Now that the provenance of her work is fully revealed, Mrs Chesnut's place in American literature is more secure than ever. The much more debatable ground concerns the value of her work as a historical source. A "diary" which is a literary contrivance, but certainly not the faithful day-to-day record which it purports to be, can provide little or no worthwhile evidence of what happened - what was actually done or said - on a particular occasion. This is frankly admitted by Professor Woodward, but it is a very considerable admission which he has to make. His claim for Mrs Chesnut is not on the grounds of the specific information she provides, but the vivid and life-like picture which she paints of a society in the throes of its life-and-death struggle. It is a valid point but it does not dispose of the difficulty created by the diary form. A genuine diarist may fail any day to write current events, but I do not vouch for anything, or "I write what I hear not what I know", or "It is hard, in such a hurry as things are in, to separate wheat from chaff". But when such statements remain in a carefully reworked account, written twenty years later, they raise more serious doubts. The problem goes beyond factual accuracy and reliability. The work is peppered with caustic criticisms of individuals, issues and institutions - above all of slavery - and the reader would like to be sure that these were the opinions and judgments of Mrs Chesnut as events unfolded during the war years, rather than retrospective comments, made with the benefit of hindsight. Professor Woodward does his best to provide reassurance on this point - and one could wish for no more trustworthy guide - but, in the absence of the original 1860s journals, which have not been published, it is impossible to be certain about any specific point.

In the circumstances, it is even more important than usual to get to know the author as well as possible. Here Professor Mühlentfeld's biography is often helpful not only in its happy blend of sympathy and good sense, but also by its modesty in refusing to claim too much for its subject, or to know more about her than the somewhat limited sources can reveal. Mary Chesnut's social credentials were as impeccable as almost any in the old South. Her father was a prominent public figure - congressman, governor of South Carolina, senator, and enthusiastic cham-

ption of the cause of nullification in the 1830s. By marrying into the Chesnut family, she became linked to one of the great planter families of the state. Her father-in-law, James Chesnut senior, was a truly patriarchal figure, "and being lord of all he surveyed", says Mary Chesnut, "it is wonderful that he was not a greater tyrant". His wife came from Philadelphia, and, according to her daughter-in-law, spent the next sixty or seventy years "trying to make it up to the negroes for being slaves". Their son James, Mary's husband, planter, lawyer, briefly a senator in the late 1850s (and the first Southern senator to resign his seat after Lincoln's election) and trusted aide and adviser to Jefferson Davis, emerges as one of the unsung, and probably unintended, heroes of his wife's book. Quiet, dignified, discreet and immensely long suffering, he only occasionally rebuked his irrepressible wife for her frivolities and indiscretions. Mary Chesnut sometimes lost patience with James, but she was clearly devoted to him and proud of him. When she observed that the Cary sisters, noted beauties in Richmond society, preferred him to his wife she added, "I don't mind. I do, too". By his social position and his various public offices, he gave her entrée into the highest levels of Confederate society, and she made the very most of it.

Mary Chesnut's picture of Southern society is essentially a view from the top. She could be massively condescending about the "sandhills" of up-state South Carolina, or the pretensions to elegance, amid the grubby realities, of small-town North Carolina society. ("Miss McLean is one of the beauties, the belles, the heiresses of the place... but she does not brush her teeth, the first evidence of civilization.") She paints a highly ambivalent picture of life on the great Chesnut plantation at Camden. She appreciates its elegance and order and its creature comforts, but finds it suffocating and often deadly dull. After tasting the delights of Richmond society, and becoming one of its luminaries, she faces the prospect of returning to Camden with all the enthusiasm of a recaptured prisoner on the way back to jail. The most vivid and entertaining chapters of Mary Chesnut's work are set in Richmond. They offer startling contrasts between the gaiety and gossip of a hectic social round and the constant reminders of a deadly war on the threshold of the capital - the bells tolling incessantly for the funerals of the fallen and the steady stream of sick, wounded and mutilated survivors. The war-making and the merry-making intersect constantly, often in time with the rapid fluctuations of Mrs Chesnut's mercurial temperament. One of her big set-pieces - the courtship of the dazzling Sally "Buck" Preston by the brave but gauche General Hood, who lost a leg and the use of an arm during the war - serves, in its mixture of romance and pathos, comedy and tragedy, as an apt metaphor for the trials and tribulations, and ultimate collapse, of Southern society at war.

Her opposition to slavery had little or nothing to do with concern for the slaves, whom she describes as "the idlest, laziest, fattest, most comfortably contented peasantry that ever cumbered the earth", living off their owners, and breeding like rabbits. Rather, she condemns slavery for the burden, economic, social and moral, which it imposed on Southern whites. It was a burden which her generation had inherited from the past, for as she asked on one occasion, who would own slaves who was not born to it? It was a system of many evils, and she deplored its cruelties and barbarities - though, even here, her reaction to her husband's account of one such episode was to thank Heaven that she did not know the owner involved. But it was also a system which supported a way of life which she related to the full - hence her heartfelt cry that "slavery has to go, of course, and joy go with it".

Her sharpest criticisms are aimed at the impact of slavery upon standards of morality, particularly sexual morality. She rails against the double standards which she saw when white women at the time of the war were not only puritans, devotion and submissiveness, while their menfolk sired families of mulatto children. Harriet Beecher

## After The Lecture

A very great man indeed to tend to the sick of the parish and construct a temple to his nation out of clippings from the newspapers, as longlasting say these commentators as Theodorick's humid tomb.

When the leaves blow down the street and you are returning from the second funeral of the week, you will need all the overreachers in your histories to train the beam of fame on humanity's achievements.

Come then to lectures where assortments of bright prejudice stripe the evening air. The way that fashion dazzles like a flashing wing is beautiful and leaves the dust of nothing undisturbed.

Even more apt is pure spectatorship, a life passed looking, listening, reading - no Pocomacraute, no superior, but blessed by vistas and the calling of long birds among the evening limes.

But most of us are back in the snelly buddle, disappointed by our talents and our power to love. "Speak for yourself" says the One of Truthful Clockwork, and behind him faces of Immortals fill with light.

In the foreground though careers are opening. "He smoked little, drank little and fornicated a great deal." When this is tidied into courses it will leave us no more able to cope with evil than we were before.

Peter Porter

## White Socks

Professor Walter Tyler's standard work, *A Land in Turmoil: Peasants and Revolt in Fourteenth Century England*, could be lost among these shelves of books and files surrounding him. He's glaring out at smoke across the city.

Ever since he came back early from his son's Rock concert, slipped out at the interval - He'd put on an appearance, after all - And tried to work out what its implications were for England and its future

He's been bothered by some distant sirens, Fire or accident. There was a time He could identify them. Pushing Justin Or Susannah round a park of daffodils He'd imitate their urgent ululations

And his children imitated him. Whatever was there of that parent In tonight's (he quotes) performance? Though Good humour got the better of him once, He smiles now at the thought, when something

On the keyboards (is it?) did bring back A trifling comic ditty he'd made up Or they'd made up together by the lake As green ducks disregarded so much force Of academic passion so adjacent

That Susannah suddenly ignored The notice her wise elders had inserted Under the bamboo about the edge's Instability. Neat clean white cotton socks One moment, and the next Susannah's

The *Theology of Revolution's* Also there beside his own fat book But he could never bring her mind to his Main thesis springing from a question On a paper he did for his scholarship

In '39: that one revolts in hope, Not in despair. And Justin stood and stared At him when recently he switched the news off, Couldn't stand all those trite pictures any more, And stashed on a serious discussion

Only he seemed to be taking seriously. Perhaps he'd really parodied himself, That mystic self of *After Life and Wycliffe*. Who, among the writers of reviews, would say In praise, "He makes the distant close at hand?"

R. D. Lancaster

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Stowe had not shown the worst of slavery, for she had made Simon Legree a bachelor. There are no more bitter words in the whole book than Mrs Chesnut's oblique references to her father-in-law's inhumanity. This painful subject is closely connected with her occasional protests about the submissiveness of Southern women, and their subordinate status in Southern society. A few references to the slavery of women and children are not to be interpreted as a serious commitment to feminism, but rather as a means of letting off steam in moments of frustration or after a quarrel with her husband. Mary Chesnut revelled too much in the opportunities and the status offered to her as the wife of a wealthy and distinguished husband to be depicted as one of the advance guard in the battle for women's liberation.

She predicted but awaited uneasily the demise of slavery as a result of the war. Meanwhile she pondered the sphinx-like inscrutability of her personal servants as liberation drew near, occasionally worried about the possibility of servile insurrection, and shuddered with horror at the occasional sensation, such as the murder of one of her neighbours by her slaves. Her view of slavery, like her picture of Confederate society, is shot through with uncertainty, irony, paradox and ambiguity – and therein lies the enduring fascination of her work. Mary Chesnut was a severe critic of her society and its ways, but she was also very much a part of them. From her pen flowed not only caustic comments on Southern dignitaries and Southern institutions but also a vivid picture of a society, full of dashing and handsome young officers, elegant and spirited young belles, all still adhering to a traditional code of conduct, sense of honour and set of social conventions. If at times Mrs Chesnut seems determined to puncture the romantic myths of the old South, she also cherished it and mourned it. She has been extremely fortunate in both her editor and her biographer, and she is to be read, with circumspection certainly, but also with enormous pleasure.

Mrs Chesnut is free with her comments on the political and military events and personalities of the day. She is a staunch admirer of Jefferson Davis against mounting criticism, and although confessing herself somewhat in awe of him, offers charming glimpses of the careworn president relaxing *en famille* (who would have guessed that the austere Davis and his wife would have given their infant daughter the nickname "Pie cake"?) as well as a heart-rending account of the death of their young son Joe, after a fall. She has surprisingly little to say of Robert E. Lee, but her comments on many of the leading politicians and soldiers are withering. General Bragg has "a winning way of earning everyone's detestation", while Joseph E. Johnston is dismissed as a perfectionist never quite ready to act, a congenial retreatist and a carping critic who spun a web of disaffection and disloyalty to the Confederacy around him. Her greatest scorn is reserved for those who spend their energies in feuding, intrigue and destructive opposition, while the war remains to be won.

One of the abiding impressions left

by Mrs Chesnut's work, as by other first-hand accounts of the war, is of the power of rumour in an age before the arrival of instant news, and in a society which could not put its trust in the nine o'clock news. False reports abound, whether of battles or casualties or political appointments or foreign intervention. Mrs Chesnut complained that "so much that we believed is not true", and she offers abundant evidence to support the axiom that what people do not know gets them into trouble less often than "knowing things which ain't so".

If rumour and gossip had their dangers, they also provided much of the laughter which lightened even the darkest days. One will not easily forget the German lady recovering from illness, who was advised by her South Carolina doctor to try a less heavy and difficult language until she had regained her strength. The Virginian, R. M. T. Hunter, pleads that, if the Lord is on the side of the Confederacy, as the clergy maintain, "he would show his preference for us a little more plainly than he has been doing so lately". The description of young Johnny Chesnut setting off to enlist as a private, but taking his personal servant with him, encapsulates a good deal of the whole Confederate cause.

The laughter and the tears are a reflection of Mrs Chesnut's engaging, volatile, many-faceted personality. In turn frivolous yet deeply serious, flirtatious and yet profoundly loyal and loving, warm-hearted yet waspish, sharply intelligent yet irrational or even silly, she is always full of surprises and never dull. The charming unpredictability which attracted constant attention and a circle of bright young friends in war-torn Richmond make her compulsively readable over a century later.

Much has been made, too much perhaps, and not least by her present distinguished editor, of her critical comments on Negro slavery, and on the comparably servile status of women. To depict Mary Chesnut as either an abolitionist or a feminist is, however, grossly misleading. Her critique of slavery bites deep but it is written from a standpoint light-years away from Garrison or Wendell Phillips. Indeed some of her harshest words are reserved for those very Yankees who enjoyed the privilege of attacking slavery from a safe distance, in their "nice New England homes – clean, clear, sweet-smelling... Think of these holy New Englanders, forced to have a negro village walk through their houses whenever they saw fit – dirty, slatternly, idle, ill-smelling by nature". If blacks had remained in New England, they would, she argues, not without force, have gone the way of the Indian. This and many other passages show how profoundly Mrs Chesnut shared the racial assumptions of her society. "It takes these half-Africans but a moment to go back to their naked, savage animal nature", she commented after coping with a minor domestic crisis. She writes of several of her personal and domestic servants with an affectionate appreciation of their individual personalities. But she mentions only rarely and indirectly the field hands who made up the great bulk of the Chesnut family's slave labour force.

## Images of collaboration

By Alistair Horne

DAVID PRYCE-JONES:

*Paris in the Third Reich: A History of the German Occupation, 1940-1944*  
294pp. Collins. £12.50.  
0 00 216645 3

Between the launching of Hitler's *Blitzkrieg* in May 1940 and the bloodless occupation of Paris on June 14, there elapsed only thirty-five days. Paris, unlike Warsaw, had not been bombed and, because the Panzers bypassed it in their drive for the Channel ports, the city had seen virtually nothing of the war. So with the arrival of the first, *sehr korrekt*, Germans after the months of uncertainty and the agony of defeat, "a kind of euphoria reigned". For some Parisians (like the dotty Drieu and the even dottier Céline – who thought the only thing wrong with the Nazi occupation was that it wasn't brutal enough) the euphoria continued right to the end; for others (especially the Jewish population) it was swiftly to become a nightmare; but for the majority of Parisians – so David Pryce-Jones tells us – it became simply a contest to maintain the most plausible semblance of "Business as Usual".

The brutal suddenness with which the Occupation descended was doubtless one reason why in Paris, in contrast to most of the other occupied capitals of Europe, Hitler's men found existing organizations ready to collaborate with them, all the way from 1940 until the Liberation in 1944. Another reason might have been the Cartesian tidy-mindedness natural to the French bureaucracy. The notion of a sinister Fifth Column, implanted by skilful *Abwehr* operators, was of course an absurd myth. Collaboration had its genesis back in 1934, in a street-fighting between the thugs of the *Camelots du Roi* and the *Camelots du Roi* on the left, and the thugs of the left, on the right, and in the slogans of *plus tôt Hitler que Blum*. Out of it all emerged such figures as Marcel Déat and Jacques Doriot, dreadful *faux camille*, (of whom Doriot, leader of the PPF, had learnt his trade as a Communist); the rather more tragic figure of Darnand, a much-decorated old soldier who had turned to Fascism as a panacea against the corruption of the Third Republic; Brasillach, editor of the right-wing and wildly antisemitic *Je s'exprime*, founded in the early 1930s; and the *jeunisme* *à bout fanatisé* – men such as Jean Fontenay (who at least had the decency to die fighting with the Waffen SS near Hitler's bunker in Berlin), and Robert Soulat who, dug out by David Pryce-Jones, admitted that he was "in it right up to my neck" and who ended the war (also with the Waffen SS) in Pomerania.

All these personalities were duped and used – but never trusted – by the Nazis, who cunningly encouraged rivalry between the various factions, so that there could be no single rallying point for dissent. Most of these leading French Fascists were executed in the *épuration* that followed the Liberation, which, Pryce-Jones notes, for the Parisians was "in some ways more painful than what the Germans had done to them". Estimates of the number of summary executions range from 30,000 to 105,000, with a hundred thousand arrested in Paris alone. These compare with totals of Frenchmen executed by the Nazis, which vary from 1,500 (in Paris alone) to 29,600 for the whole of France. The figures, however, must be open to question; similar statistics for other episodes of modern French history are notoriously unreliable. Pryce-Jones contrasts the situation in Warsaw, a city one-third the size of Paris, where 166,000 Poles died before it was finally liberated. The difference was that Warsaw fought, and was destroyed; but the Poles saved their souls. Paris collaborated and was spared. The author who in general is severe on the Parisians, implies that they had not much soul to lose even before the Germans arrived.

*Paris in the Third Reich* is built

around a collection of what appear to be previously unpublished photographs of the period by Roger Schall and André Zucca. The captions are pedestrian, but the illustrations themselves are historical documents of the utmost fascination. One could have wished for more at the expense of parts of the text. There are shots, taken in unguarded moments, of German officers, parading at Auteuil and Longchamp races, accompanied by hard-faced blondes, and of young troops smoking at nude sculptures in the Louvre. There is a mordant contrast between Luftwaffe officers tucking in to *la grande bouffe* among potted palms at the Prince de Galles, and an almost Dickensian scene of soup being doled out in a French kindergarten. There are the eternal pretty girls, doing their best to be chic on wooden heels, and elegant ladies pumping up bicycle tyres with handboxes strapped to the carriers.

On the whole, however, the Parisian faces, generally in quest of food, are strained and unsmiling; a frightful-looking Edith Piaf peers at us out of a train window on the *metro*. There are scenes of streets empty except for *fiacres*, or man-powered *velo-taxis* plying for custom outside Maxims ("Business as Usual" – for those who could afford it). At uniformed rallies of the PPF, the Hitler salutes of Doriot and his followers look somehow ridiculous and deceptively undangerous, while the huge anti-Masonic exhibition held in the Petit Palais is reminiscent of the equally absurd Museum of Anti-Religion in present-day Leningrad. Three photographs, in particular, stand out, by virtue of their incongruity and evocativeness. One is a broken portrait of the aged Marshal Pétain, surrounded by shoes in a drop shop window; another an undersized, bespectacled German soldier – the very antithesis of the *Herrenvolk* – painting in Montmartre, under the patronizing scrutiny of the *indigènes*. Best of all is a photograph taken in August 1944 at the barricades, where a man in a pin-striped suit and wearing *polish's* steel helmet appears alongside a woman in a polka-dot dress with an oversized German helmet on her head.

Had David Pryce-Jones matched his text more closely with these admirable photographs, a much better book might have emerged. As it is, it lacks balance and tries to combine too many different themes in a restricted compass. Some of them – such as the role of the SOE and the German withdrawal from Paris – have been fully treated elsewhere. The more general subject of Vichy, to which Pryce-Jones devotes an undue amount of space, has also been explored in depth, and to better effect, by writers such as Robert A. Paxton. One of the most interesting parts of the book is the long appendix of interviews with German and French survivors, but this too adds to the overall imbalance. So does the epilogue, an account of the author's attendance at the Heinrich Himmler trial in Cologne in 1979, which hardly seems to belong here at all; while Pryce-Jones's passionate evocation of the whole appalling saga of the Paris Jews threatens to burst right out of the book.

Pryce-Jones is haunted by the image of a Jewish child's hand, seen waving desperately through the bars of a cattle truck on the long last journey to Auschwitz, until struck by a French policeman, and he rightly does not spare the Parisians who were responsible even by silent assent. In the 1930s, the French Right had the worst record of antisemitism of any country in Western Europe, and when the Nazis arrived they were not slow to seize their opportunities. The first trainings for Auschwitz left in March 1942; 75,721 Jews were deported, and 3,000 survived. The scene during the *Grande Rafle*, where whole families were rounded up and herded into the *Vel d'Hiv*, in atrocious conditions, for onward transmission to the staging concentration camp at Drancy, were among the worst of the whole Occupation. Generally, the Parisians seem to

have turned a blind eye, if they didn't actually applaud; there was better behaviour among German-like Captain Ernst Junger (his writings, incidentally, remain among the best to emerge from the whole period) "assumed to be a uniform" when he saw Jews in Paris wearing their *selbst* stars. Although even the Jewish community had its sordid corners inhabited by turncoats and profiteers, one's eye is caught by the vignette of *débrouillard* courage of the minor dramatist who proudly displayed his star, smoking a cigar while bicycling down the Champs-Élysées, with the explanation – "This is not the moment to hide one's light under a bushel!"

David Pryce-Jones is also unsparing of *Le Tout Paris* who collaborated – like the tiresome Louise de Vilmorin who was nicknamed *Lou-Lou* (not *Lulu*) de Pomerania, though later rehabilitated (and seduced) by Duff Cooper – or whose influence enabled them to continue guzzling. "In times like these," observed Ernst Junger, "to eat well and to eat a lot gives a feeling of power." Writers too receive the lash, but it was wrong to go on writing, especially when the war seemed without end, or was it merely wrong to publish, thereby automatically requiring Nazi approval? Some surprising figures are quoted to suggest that many took the latter course; in 1943, 9,348 titles were published in France compared with 8,230 in the United States. The author is particularly scathing about the Sartre-de Beauvoir clique, gossiping away in the Florentine and evaluating the philosophy of Existentialism that was to bedazzle a whole generation. Sartre, we are told, supported the CNE – a writers' body "dominated by Communists and fellow travellers less interested in resistance than in drawing up lists of other writers and journalists whom they would proscribe and silence after the war". Simone de Beauvoir bemoaned the fact that "politically we found ourselves reduced to a condition of total impotence"; their friend, Albert Camus, however, avoided such impotence – by joining the Resistance.

Who were the worst? Apart from the Parisians who sold out the Jews, perhaps the worst were the "gossamer", or weathercocks: the "collaborators" and black-marketers who saved their skin by switching to the Resistance at the last moment. I always remember a French friend, a heroine of the Resistance who survived three years in Ravensbrück, telling me how – briefly – she had turned Communist on her return, out of nausea at the spectacle of the *bourgeois* *maîtres et petits fonctionnaires*, all *gironettes* or *résistants* *du dernier moment*, busily decorating each other. But there were always, like her, the heroic Parisians of the *résistance*; Mr Pryce-Jones does not perhaps say enough about them. And, at the end of this sad tale, Englishmen could do well to ask themselves the question "what would I have done?"

*American Government and Politics* by Allen M. Potter, Peter Fotheringham, and James G. Kellas (363pp. Faber. £9.50. Paperback, £3.95. 0 571 18044 2) is a third and revised edition of a book which was originally published in 1955 with Allen M. Potter as its sole author. The first chapter, one of the "American Scene" with sections on "The Growth of the American Democracy", "The Making of Present-day America", "The Nation" and "The States". The book continues with chapters on "The Constitution", "Federalism", "The Electoral System" (with sections on the "Size and Complexity of the Electoral System", "Presidential Elections", "The Congressional and State Electoral Systems", "The Suffrage" and "Campaign Financing"), "Election and Voting", "Political Parties", "The President", "The Courts and the Law", "The Supreme Court and Civil Liberties" and an Appendix containing *The Constitution of the United States*.

C. A. MACDONALD:

*The United States, Britain and Appeasement 1936-1939*  
220pp. Macmillan. £15.  
0 333 261 690

The relations between the Great Powers in the 1930s were, perhaps more than at any other time since the French Revolution, conditioned by ideology. On the one side there stood the three "liberal democracies" of France, Britain (together with the Dominions) and the United States. On the other there lurked the "revisionist" fascist states of Germany, Italy and Japan. Standing apart from each group was a Soviet Union following political principles which rejected both parliamentary democracy and fascism. The overall context within which foreign affairs was conducted was, therefore, markedly different from the era of *Kabulpolitik*, under Bismarck or Sir Edward Grey.

One should not conclude from this, of course, that the international crisis of the 1930s arose solely from ideological disagreements. The internal politics of the different states, not to mention their historical traditions and geographical situations, conditioned attitudes towards foreign policy and pushed countries against each other. So, too, did the economic pecking-order, and whether a nation considered itself to be a "have" or a "have-not" within that order.

Nonetheless, these more usual causes for antagonism were underpinned by, and made sharper by, conflicting ideologies. There can be no doubt of the fascist leaders' scorn for the older liberal beliefs, nor of the mutual distaste shown towards the dictator regimes by western statesmen as varied as Roosevelt, Hull, Chamberlain, Churchill, Daladier, Bonnet, and many others. And the more that dreadful decade unfolded, the more evident became this basic clash of political values. Even diplomats whose task it was to minimize differences between states, and to negotiate if need be with the Devil, admitted as much.

If this was so, if in essence a Manichean divide existed between the forces of "good" and those of "evil", why were the former unable to coordinate their resistance to the world-wide fascist threat? After all, the dictators for their part often seemed to be acting in conjunction:

## Battlefield strategy

By Nigel Hamilton

RUSSELL F. WEGLEY:

*Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany 1944-1945*  
800pp. Sidgwick and Jackson.  
£12.50.  
0 283 98801 0

This is, purely and simply, a book about the American army. From the very start Russell Wegley's narrative, and his balanced judgment are in evidence, and his setting of the American background to the Normandy campaign is admirably lucid, concise and authoritative. "The American army's two principal inheritances from the past were also conflicting legacies," Wegley observes. "The memory of the Western border was suggested that the primary military value is sheer power." General U.S. Grant's great blue army corps overthrew the gray legions of R.E. Lee under the weight of their weapons and numbers. To repel the slow and cautious general, Wegley sees him as the only

formal proclamations of an "axis" or a tripartite pact were interspersed by informal, but no less threatening acts of coordination – witness Abyssinia and the Rhineland, Prague and Albania, Tientsin and Danzig. Even if the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo connection was not as tight as it appeared to be, it compared favourably with the muddled, often uncoordinated policies of the three democracies, each of which tugged in different directions, occasionally weakening and undermining the efforts of one another. By standing firmly together they might still not have deterred the "revisionist" powers from aggression (except, probably, Italy); but they could well have made the early years of the Second World War less disastrous for themselves.

Throughout the inter-war years, for example, London and Paris repeatedly quarrelled with each other over how to handle the German question; yet geographical propinquity, and the shared dangers, gradually pushed them closer as the 1930s developed. Reluctant partners they might have been, but at least they entered the war as allies. The really uncoordinated, disjointed relationship was that between Washington and London, and this important theme is the subject of C.A. MacDonald's book *The United States, Britain and Appeasement 1936-1939*. Making particularly good use of the private papers of Chamberlain and Roosevelt, as well as of the State Department, Foreign Office and Cabinet records, the author has produced a solid account of Anglo-American diplomatic relations during the three years preceding the outbreak of war.

The book is not, as its title might perhaps suggest, a comparative study of American and British appeasement, and of the forces which influenced that policy – the military, public opinion, and so on. Essentially a diplomatic narrative, its main theme can be summarized as "How Roosevelt tried to manoeuvre the British into a proper policy towards the dictators"; that key word "proper" being subject, of course, only to American definition. From Washington's viewpoint, the fractured globe could only be restored to health again by the application of traditional liberal economic principles – an open world order, the end of exclusive trading arrangements, and free access to raw materials. This "package", whilst benefiting American business most of all, would also bring about a general prosperity, thus undercutting the appeals of right-wing extremists and giving the

army of the frontier to the new army of European war."

Once the European battles start, however, Professor Wegley has difficulties. Why does he ignore the preliminary campaigns in North Africa and Sicily, as well as the simultaneous American campaign in Italy? The trouble is that he is too honest an investigator. He wishes to give the reader a fair account of the American army's performance under fire ("a day's trial by battle often reveals more of the essential nature of an army than a generation of peace") and thus commit himself to a laborious recitation of the American army's progress from Normandy to the Elbe, division by division, corps by corps, army by army. Somehow, such painstaking reconstruction tends to make one feel that events followed an inevitable course, and Wegley's broad-front approach mirrors, so to speak, the very failings of the campaign he chronicles – and so rightly criticizes.

Yet for anyone with the time to read it, this is an absorbing survey of the campaign in North-West Europe. Surprisingly, Field-Marshal Montgomery turns out to be its star. Contradicting the view of Montgomery as an excessively slow and cautious general, Wegley sees him as the only

By Paul Kennedy

"moderates" in Germany (especially) and Japan the chance to regain control. If the fascist leaders opposed such ideas, preferring autarky, arms and aggression to international harmony, they would be exposed and the world opinion would consolidate itself against them. In addition, isolationist Americans would at last pull their heads out of the sand and see the globe as it really was.

But the most remarkable feature of this American strategy was that it should be, not the United States, but Britain, which took the lead in lessening world tensions and, by extension, in standing firm against the dictators. If the policy failed, London's diplomacy therefore had to be controlled – for its own good, to be sure – by Washington. This was a role, however, which Neville Chamberlain resolutely declined to play. Being pushed forward into an exposed position by Uncle Sam was, in his eyes, far too risky. If the strategy failed, the Empire might face the impossible task of defending itself against three revisionist powers, and with no guarantee of American military or (given the Neutrality Act) economic aid. What Chamberlain instead preferred was to "buy off" Berlin by reasonable economic and territorial concessions, thus breaking the Axis bloc and in this way strengthening the hand of the German "moderates".

In any case, the Prime Minister had no wish to see the British Empire become politically dependent upon the United States, for that might ultimately mean the end of imperial preference. Hence his own, dogged, independent efforts at the appeasement of Germany – restrained only to the extent that it was necessary to appear friendly to the United States, so as to worry the dictators and avoid criticism from the pro-American circles in Britain.

The result of all this can easily be imagined. Chamberlain's appeasement policy, especially the Munich concessions but also the Anglo-German trade negotiations, caused irritation and suspicion among Roosevelt and his advisors. The British, they felt, were up to tricks. They appeared neither to subscribe to the open world economic order, despite its God-given precepts, nor did they shrink from cowardly surrenders of other countries' territories to Hitler. Yet as the international scene worsened, it became even more necessary for Washington to encourage London, by a carrot-and-stick policy, to do its duty. Sometimes, therefore, the two nations (with anxious French approval) did manage

commander who possessed both the ability to face German opponents in all-out frontal fighting and a bold, imaginative battlefield strategy.

The source of all evil for Wegley was the placing of the American army on the right of its British counterpart, for, lacking the manpower resources of the United States, the British were forced to husband their troops and were unwilling to risk them in a do-or-die breakout and envelopment of the enemy. If only the American army had been given the Cien-Falaise sector, Wegley argues, history might have been very different, and the war might have ended in 1944. With their superior manpower, and a tradition of both head-on infantry attrition as well as frontier cavalry manoeuvre, the Americans could have broken out from the coast, raced to Brussels and Antwerp, across the Rhine and on to Berlin, with the British guarding their right flank.

Instead, as Wegley chronicles, the war followed a very different pattern. Montgomery's strategy in Normandy (his real strategy, not his later "all went according to plan" version) was defeated by German resistance, and the bocage in front of the Americans. The eventual result was COBRA – the American break-

out to cooperate – over the Far East by 1939, or in their eventual policy towards Mussolini. But more often than not Anglo-American relations were marred by disagreement over the timing, purposes and the methods of handling the dictators. Such mutual suspicions were increasingly personified in those two radically different politicians, Roosevelt and Chamberlain, and even in the late summer of 1939 the former suspected that the Prime Minister was planning to "do a Munich" on the Poles. As for Chamberlain, one suspects that he never really altered his 1937 conviction that it was "always best and safest to count on nothing from the Americans except words".

*The United States, Britain and Appeasement 1936-1939* is, in sum, a detailed and useful account of a political three-legged race in which the partners, professing heading towards the same general goal of world peace and prosperity, were nearly always out of step and not infrequently tripping each other up.

Such weaknesses as exist in MacDonald's book derive chiefly from the approach he has chosen. Having new and valuable archival sources to exploit, he has tended to stay rather close to the documents. The story is not set in its larger context at the beginning, and the conclusion, although it makes some useful points, is simply too short to deal with the bigger questions which this subject provokes. No attempt is made to assess, for example, how realistic the rival strategies were: after all, since both Roosevelt and Chamberlain sought, in their different ways, to aid the so-called German "moderates", does not any judgment of the viability of their policies require more reference to the German side, and to the newer German literature? Do not the subjective assessments that the President and the Prime Minister made of each other need measuring against the historical record? Further, is there not a need, at some place in the book, for a fuller analysis of the constraints (economic weakness, pressure from the Dominions, the rise of Labour etc) placed upon any British government that sought to carry out the "forward" policy promoted by Roosevelt? Only when those considerations are checked against the claims (made here by MacDonald, but elsewhere by Maurice Cowling) that Chamberlain pursued appeasement in order to avoid a future *Pax Americana*, can we properly begin to assess the priority of motives in the Prime Minister's strategy. Such

criticisms should not detract from the solid worth of MacDonald's story, but should serve to remind us of the framework within which his researches will need to be placed. The strong impression remains that we continue to lack a proper measure of where the United States stood in the world "system" during the late 1930s. This gap is not a novel discovery; scholars like Donald Watt and Christopher Thorne have made the point before, but it needs to be reiterated. American historians of the period have rarely considered their country's international position (as opposed to its foreign policy); and non-Americans have tended to focus upon events in Europe, or the Far East. There are good reasons for such decisions, but in some ways the result has been like Hamlet without the Prince. Even at that time, the United States was the greatest power in the world. Its financial strength had underpinned war-torn Europe in the 1920s, and then disrupted it after 1929. By the eve of war, American productive strength was, at a rough estimate, at least twice that of Great Britain, three times that of France, five times that of Japan. As the pace of rearmament quickened, it alone seemed to be able to reconcile military ends with financial means. Without American support, as everyone (Chamberlain, Hitler, the French) knew, neither Britain nor France could sustain another long war.

Yet despite this economic preponderance, this vast magnetic core influencing and distorting the traditional fields of force, the United States avoided the leadership role. It was powerful yet unpredictable, a presence brooding behind the curtains whilst the minor actors measured by their military staying-power, at least) performed in the centre of the stage. Neither London nor Paris could be unaffected by its moods. In Berlin, it now seems clear, Hitler was resolved to unify Europe under German authority before, as he saw it, a future American domination of the world. In Rome and Tokyo, too, the leadership tried to assess what American reactions would be to their own planned moves. Yet no one in the United States, not even Roosevelt, could tell what Washington's policy would be that is, how far the public would allow the President to go. It was, and still remains to historians, a most curious international situation, and one which calls out for further analysis and reflection if we are to get that troubled decade correctly in focus.

sources to win through by a margin." This, though undoubtedly true, highlights one of the failures of Wegley's book. Eisenhower's broad-front strategy meant that the Russians – not the Allies, won the Second World War in Europe – yet the Russians are nowhere to be seen – or heard of – in these pages. He is too hard, also, on Bradley and too soft on Eisenhower. By quoting brief extracts from Eisenhower's papers, he tries to show him as an astute planner, strategist and even, on occasion, tactician. This may well have been the case – yet it belies the real failure of Eisenhower's "administration" in the campaign, which was one of command. But for the progress of the Russians in the East there can be no doubt that Eisenhower would, like Joffre, have been removed. Bradley was probably the best infantry commander America has produced since the Civil War, and he should not be blamed for Eisenhower's failure to provide proper generalship in the field. Only in the case of the final *opéra bouffe* in South Germany – the Nazi "redoubt" – does Wegley really point the finger at Eisenhower, and even then he manages to shift part of the opprobrium onto Bradley.

The chief defect of this book is its lack of proper maps. Those provided are a disgrace in what is a serious work of military history.

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The Hypochondriac  
Olivier Theatre

*Le Malade Imaginaire* is a curious hotchpotch of a play, in which time-worn comic devices and routines are mixed with serious comedy of character and a number of musical interludes. Molière had used the combination of spoken scene and musical interlude very successfully in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, but in this play the two elements are not well-matched. Pastoral ballets in praise of Louis XIV, or Egyptians dressed as Moors singing the pleasures of youth, do not add a great deal to the domestic drama of health-obsessed monomania and frustrated young love. It is difficult not to feel that the work was thrown together in haste.

Despite this unevenness, however, the play had a big success when first performed and it has remained one of Molière's most popular comedies. This is due principally to the character of Argan, the hypochondriac. For

not only is his obsession the driving force of the play, it is also a broad, grand, comprehensive obsession. Unlike Argan in *Tartuffe* (with whom he is sometimes compared) or Harpagon in *L'Avare*, Argan suffers from a delusion which we can easily understand and, to a certain extent, find sympathetic. Indeed, from housewives on Valium to health-freaks on multi-vitamins, theatre audiences must be full of potential Argans.

There is, too, the fact that this was Molière's last play. He was ill when he wrote it and he died shortly after the fourth performance. This gives an extra dimension to the play. Attacks on doctors, like attacks on lawyers, pedants and other self-styled experts, are standard comic fare, and had often been used as such by Molière. *Le Malade Imaginaire* contains its staple amount of this material. But in the long third-act scene between Argan and his brother Bérvalde, Molière treats the subject in a completely different way; it is this scene that makes the play less about doctors than about hypochondria, the obsessive need for doctors. Bérvalde wants to rid Argan of his obsession and he reasons with him patiently and good-humouredly.

What evidence is there that doctors know what they claim to know? If we left nature to do her own work we would be all right. "C'est notre inquiétude, c'est notre impatience qui gâte tout". But that is the heart of the matter, that "inquiétude". For it is Argan's true disease. And it is because of it that Argan is so angry about the attacks made on doctors by Molière. If I were a doctor, he adds, I would take any revenge on his (Molière's) impudence: if he were ill I would let him die. A remark which in the circumstances gives this scene a terrible poignancy.

It is an indication of what is wrong with the National Theatre production that the reference to "inquiétude" has been cut. For this is a production which has no centre to it. Daniel Massey is endeavouring as Argan but he lacks any inner compulsion, anxiety or fear. He enjoys his obsession but we feel he could do without it; it is like a harmless hobby, a pet fad. As a result his obstinacy seems no more than bad temper, childish tantrums or an old man's willfulness. The play is thus deprived of its essential dynamic; the audience are not drawn into the crazy world which this character inhabits. There is no

development from the inner disorder of Argan's imagination to the external knockabout that ensues. Indeed the knockabout seems gratuitous.

The cast work hard to overcome this central deficiency in the production, though they are not helped by the hackneyed nature of much of the business they are given. There is a brilliant cameo performance by Michael Fenner as Thomas Diafoirus, but generally it is not the comedy parts but the straight characters who come across best — Anna Cartaret as Argan's wife, Michael Bryant as the brother, and Emily Morgan and Clive Arrindell who are excellent as the young lovers. The difficult scene of Angélique finding her father dead, then alive, and then her renunciation of marriage, is well handled.

The director, Michael Bogdanov, has reworked most of the musical scenes, expanding the reference to Carnival so that the whole play is set in a Carnival framework. This was a good idea, but it has not been realized with enough invention to make it convincing. The translation by Alan Drury has a few lapses, some good touches, and is generally fluent and efficient.

**For to admire an' for to see****By Peter Kemp**

In the Eye of the Sun  
Gate Theatre

The title of John Clegg's one-man show — which sadly ends its short run at the Gate on November 7 — comes from a Kipling poem, enthusiastically hailing "the sights and the sounds and the smells / That ran with our youth in the eye of the sun". Splendidly, the evening stirs these back to life as it displays the sensuous prodigality of Kipling's response to India.

The set is extremely simple: wicker furniture, writing utensils, a decanter and a pipe, a few books with covers as red as British possessions on a nineteenth-century map. Uncannily resembling the Kipling of the Philip Bane-Jones portrait, John Clegg walks and talks around these items, using Kipling's words — poems, stories, fragments of autobiography — to build up a mosaic of the Raj.

Clegg's opening manoeuvres are perhaps a bit pell-mell. After fleeting glimpses of Kipling's Bombay childhood home, we are whisked to South India and the dreary house whose "aridity and emptiness" did so much to fertilize his imagination by making it receptive to India. Lightning schooldays follow, and a rapid passage back: Kipling seems hardly arrived at Westward Ho! before he's eastward bound. Then, as he reaches Lahore, where he starts to write, the pace slackens and Clegg's performance really gets into its stride.

His material, skilfully selected and sometimes discreetly edited, demonstrates the variety of writing India's diversity provoked from Kipling. Not all aspects are equally represented. Happily, the *Just So Stories* — those pieces of Anglo-Indian proto-Disney supply only one extract. More

surprisingly, the tales of hill-station high-jinks and philandering under the deodars are completely bypassed. Mrs Hauksbee gets cold-shouldered. What Clegg concentrates on is writing that memorably evokes the sights and sounds of India: its pleasures and its pains. As he moves through his repertoire, it's striking how many references to the excitement of looking occur. An extract from *Kim* remarks on "new sights in every turn of the approving eye". Elsewhere, Kipling assures his creator: "I saw fought common on Thy Earth" and in "one of the collo-

quial poems, a soldier speaks of his urge "For to admire an' for to see". The selections here triumphantly testify to the power of this impulse.

Kipling's India, from its saffron dawns to its turquoise twilights, is drenched in colour — especially red. Blood, as Clegg's selection shows, wells out from his writing everywhere — spurring, seeping, dripping, and drying under a parching sun into flaky lozenges that curl up into the air like "dumb tongues". Cruelty and pain, Clegg keeps bringing out, are never very far from the tamarisks and temple bells. And Kipling's work is also vitalized by precisely-crafted sounds. His poems can be alert to the faintest evocative murmur — from "the lip of the split banana-fruit" to "thin, tin, crackling roofs". The prose, too — as a neat dove-tailing of passages from *Kim* exemplifies — can be atmospherically

chock-a-block with India's noises: bullocks "chumping", the tinkle of a sitar, squeals and giggles from shuttered pariah-carts, "gurgling, grunting hookahs, which in full blast sound like bull-frogs".

Clegg's renderings also point up the importance of the human voice in Kipling's writing. Much of the narrative prose, as he has obviously found and now expertly demonstrates, cries aloud to be spoken. One of Clegg's display pieces is the telling of a ghost story, "The Return of Inray", an exercise in Raj *macabre* that alternates nerve-pluckingly between a tone of clubbable stolidity ("we lit tobacco and thought") and gruffly creepy understatement ("At the end of an hour he died, as they die who are bitten by the little brown karai").

But Clegg's greatest success, really, is in showing off the emotional

and social variety of the *Barrack-Room Ballads*. Slipping effortlessly in and out of tones and accents, he illustrates how Kipling, at his best, could make the dramatic monologue fall compellingly into step with the ballad. Ranging from dropped-itches nostalgia to crowing jubilation about going home, Clegg pleasingly reveals the width of mood. And he is excellent at refurbishing such staid familiar as "Gunga Din" or "Mandalay", with their pungent compounds of Cockney and lingo, knowledge and lyricism. As the stage resounds to different dialects, accents, tones, it strikes you what a pity it was that Kipling never channelled his vernacular abilities into better poems and stories show, can ring with authenticity. *In the Eye of the Sun* offers a fine impersonation of this many-voiced talent. It's worth hurrying to see.

**Playing Pound safe****By Paul Driver**

The Cage  
St John's Smith Square

The muddled life and tragic demise of Ezra Pound have been exercising a number of writers and musicians lately. Earlier this year Bernard Kops's play, *Ezra*, was successfully staged at the New Half Moon Theatre; subsequently it was adapted for transmission on Radio 3. At a concert in St John's, Smith Square on October 20 the Lontano Ensemble gave the first performance of a cantata, *The Cage*, specially commissioned from Nigel Osborne, which, like Kops's treatment, focuses on the years Pound spent incarcerated in Pisa in a metal cage used for the transportation of gorillas.

The fact that Pound here composed some of his greatest poetry makes it a uniquely attractive *mise-en-scène*, one rendered by Kops in lurid, unsparring detail. Nigel Osborne, on the other hand, has entirely resisted the temptations of melodrama and — expressionism. Whereas Kops's play confined itself to a simulation of Pound's railing and despondency and did not borrow one word of his poetry, Osborne and Whitting have tried to project and analyse Pound's predicament purely through musical-highlighting of cru-

cial fragments from the *Plan Cantos*. No attempt is made to dramatize the figure of Pound in his cage; the tenor soloist stands at the back of the circle of nine instrumentalists and has a strictly impersonal function, often singing in a ritualistic falsetto, subject at times to discreet electronic modulation.

Nor does the text offer any direct reference to Pound's situation. It is a cento of the multi-lingual allusions to world-literature that are freely scattered through the *Plan Cantos*. Whitting has cleverly condensed 125 pages of verse into a mere twenty-five "touchstone" phrases which convey something of the broken luminosity of the whole. There is a latent narrative progression in the arrangement from states of despair to ecstasy to resignation that Nigel Osborne has emphasized in his music. But the work remains an abstract and oblique account of its subject: it is the pure plangency of Pound's situation that is expressed.

The music, though marked by brief, wild outbursts, is surprisingly delicate and cajoling. The instrumentation affords much colour: there is a beautiful oboe d'amore accompaniment to the tenor's line, "Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel, l'enfer non plus"; alto flute, bass clarinet and trumpet make attractive contributions elsewhere. The concluding slow, pianissimo — chorale for the whole ensemble ("Pauvre et ancienne") is a notable invention —

deceptively diatonic, bleak and elegant at the same time. In sound, duration (just over fifteen minutes) and technique the score resembles Osborne's recent *Mythologies*, also in Lontano's repertoire. Both employ "boxes" in the notation which are systems of ornamentation and limited improvisation (and suggest Osborne's debt to contemporary Polish composers). As a result the scores look chaotic and are difficult to follow; but, in opposition to the run of modern compositions, they actually sound orderly and delightful.

Perhaps there is too much charm and not enough tension for *The Cage* finally to be judged adequate to its subject matter. Under Odaline do la Martinez's direction and with John Potter as intelligent, accurate soloist it impressed for tunefulness and classical containment, but something of Pound's own creative abandon and prolixity was nonetheless missed. John Whitting's programme note observed that Pound "never played it safe". Nigel Osborne, in this instance, has still, one had an inkling that here in sketch-form might be the makings of an interesting opera.

Forthcoming events at the Poetry Society, 21 Earls Court Square, SW5, include a discussion about poetry and the small press (November 10, 7.30) and a reading by Judith Kazantzis and Anne Harvey (November 12, 7.30) from their anthology of women's poetry of the First World War, being published by Virago.

**commentary****'Nickleby' in New York****By Stephen Koss**

Poor Nick, always so honest, trusting and unwilling. He might have learnt a lesson from Martin Chuzzlewit or indeed from Dickens himself. Instead, like them, he has continued his "life and adventures" across the Atlantic, where he has fallen into the hands of the sharpers.

His overwhelming success on the London stage certified his quality as a commodity for export. And so, accompanied by 150 characters played by forty-two actors, he came to the Plymouth Theatre on Broadway. His arrival was heralded by a promotional campaign of unprecedented magnitude and utter tastelessness. Nichols has been given the big sell as only New York can give it. He deserved better. The production, transported for a fourteen-week season, is gloriously intact. But it has been invested, quite literally, with a new and inappropriate aura which defeats the purpose of the enterprise. For *Nicholas Nickleby* has been packaged as an extravaganza, not an extravaganza. Most offensively, its costliness has been more loudly touted than its merit.

"The experience is priceless", proclaim the posters which replicate the ones used in London, but with a difference. The original background, composed of a dense juxtaposition of Victorian scenes, has been replaced by a field of glistening gold. Indeed, the experience could better be described

as pricey. The spectator, addressed as a consumer, buys not a ticket but a seat for a consecutive pair of performances. Every seat at the Plymouth, regardless of location, goes for the staggering sum of one hundred dollars. It is not so much a purchase as a coronation. At the Aldwych in London, where a system of laissez-faire prevailed, the two parts of the play were treated as divisible: you could book for either half or for both at an interval convenient to yourself; if you were especially harried or perverse, you could manage the two parts in reverse sequence. At the start of the initial run, there was even a discount for those with sufficient faith to bind themselves for any two performances. Arrangements in New York are predictably more regimented. One may attend parts one or two on any Wednesday, Saturday or Sunday afternoons and evenings, or on the Thursday and Friday evenings of the same week. Other combinations are ruled out, and seats are not sold for half a *Nickleby*, which may be better than none.

By making the experience so expensive to obtain (twenty cents per minute, it has been reckoned), the New York management has obviously exploited the production for its snob appeal. "You are about to spend more money for a theatre ticket than you ever thought possible", say the advertisements. "You get what you pay for", intones the same radio announcer who temulously implores listeners to patronize the Metropolitan Opera in order to "strike a blow for civilization". Without considering the effect upon household budgets, parents are advised that "no civilized family can deny the pleasure to its children".

To a limited extent, the campaign has caught on. Those who have paid the price boast a certain chic, unobtainable from the Masterpiece Theatre and other private anglophile additions. The reviewers have lent their support: "Skip a mortgage payment, pawn the children", one of them recommended, "but see *Nicholas Nickleby*". But, as is sported on select handbags and lapels, depicting Roger Rees's head, shoulders, and clenched fist, along with the inscription "I Was Nicked". The double entendre is intentional and itself a pointed commentary. In a town where the byword used to be "I can get it for you wholesale", it has become a mark of cultural status to have been genteelly ripped-off. Better to be mugged at the box

office, so to speak, than on the subway.

On Sunday, October 4, the day before the formal opening and before the reviews were in, the *New York Times* provided its readers with "a guide to seeing *Nicholas Nickleby*" that explained the complexities of booking procedures and offered some further guidance. "To enhance enjoyment, one should read, or re-read, the original novel", now available in a new and more expensive paperback edition. Patrons were told how and where to scramble for refreshment in the fifty-five-minute pause between parts of the eight-and-a-half hour whole, a break in "the Dickensian banquet on stage". The following morning, however, the paper accorded *Nickleby* a studiously tempered reception. "We get an outsized event that sometimes seems in search of a shape", wrote Frank Rich, who wildly mixed his metaphors. "While the high points . . . are Himalayan indeed, they are separated by dull passages which clog the production's arteries". The problem, it was asserted, lay with the adaptation. Perhaps Mr Rich should have consulted that paperback.

There were initial fears that ticket sales would suffer from the *Times*'s all-important review, which suggested that the required sacrifices in time and money were excessive. Surely they were not helped by the appearance of a full-page advertisement, two pages later in the same issue, which announced that the Mobil Oil Corporation would soon be sponsoring a four-part telecast of the Royal Shakespeare Company's marathon, complete with narration by Peter Ustinov. Those who hesitate to skip their mortgage payments and pawn their children can sit at home and wait.

Viewers watching either American Public Broadcasting or the British fourth channel will miss the scope and flow of the stage production and inevitably much of the boisterous activity along the sidelines. The performance, particularly its second instalment, has been effectively tightened since I saw it early in its London run. Roger Rees has wonderfully preserved his air of sympathetic bemusement, Suzanne Bertish her vivacious versatility, and John Woodvine his mercantile gravitas. Lila Kaye, who was reported to have made the crossing by sea, is still more slyly captivating. The pivotal role of Smike has been restored to David Threlfall, who created it. Ben Kingsley, however, was more successful than his lumbering successor in conveying the leering malice of Squeers.

The Plymouth offers a more compact auditorium than the triple-decked Aldwych, though its neo-classical décor detracts from the atmosphere before the lights dim. That, to be sure, is the least of *Nickleby*'s disadvantages. It may be doubted whether any production could live up to the reputation of being the theatrical event of the decade, much less the theatrical event of a lifetime. *Nicholas Nickleby* has also had to live up to — or possibly live down — the glare of its local publicity. John Caird, one of its co-directors, confessed his misgivings to an interviewer. The presentation, as it had evolved, was "truly representative of our view that the theatre is popular, accessible and hospitable for all sections of society". Yet the uniform price for a double admission in New York, almost five times the price of two choice seats in London, puts the experience beyond the reach of a vast potential audience which lacks the affluence to matter. If nothing else, this goes flatly against the spirit of Dickens and that of the RSC as well.

"You get what you pay for" — half a promise, half a commercial admonition, and wholly spurious as an artistic principle — was the materialist philosophy of Nicholas's Uncle Ralph. At the risk of giving away the plot, it may be recalled that he himself got nicked in the end, and without so much as a souvenir button to show for it.



A painted bisque porcelain statuette of Johann Nestroy as Sansquartier in *Zwölf Mädchen in Uniform*. It is in the John and Rita Russell Collection of figures from the Viennese theatre, at Harvard. An illustrated article about the collection appears in the Harvard Library Bulletin, July 1981. (Tom Soppard's adaptation of Nestroy's *Einem Jux* will be seen in the Razzle, reviewed in Commentary on September 11.)

**American Writers' Congress****By Eva Figes**

The American Writers' Congress, the first occasion of its kind for forty years, took place in a blaze of television lights and amid considerable media coverage generally in New York over Columbus weekend, from October 9 to 12. It had been initiated and organized by the *Nation* magazine through its Nation Institute with the help of a grant from the Olinburg Family Foundation, and had taken a year of planning which, judging by the chaos which reigned on the first couple of days, was not enough. The organizers expected 2,500 people to come to the Roosevelt Hotel, but when 5,000 would-be participants turned up on Friday night the doors were shut and fights were reported on 45th Street as a couple of thousand angry writers were turned away. By the next morning, a large town hall a couple of blocks away in mid-Manhattan had been hired to cope with the overflow, but a certain amount of confusion continued on the Saturday as participants milled about between conference rooms, most of which were already jammed to capacity. Panelists had been invited to speak on an enormous range of topics from an agenda that seemed in a constant state of last-minute flux, and my own feeling was that fewer events in larger rooms would have been preferable.

The mood behind the Congress was one of crisis, and its intention was action rather than mere discussion. To quote the opening words of the *Nation*'s special issue on the situation of the writer today: "Conglomerate takeovers in the communications industry are nothing new. It is the intersection of the new and the old that has scared, enraged and begun to transform those who care about the state of the literary art." Censorship was also a major issue, with many famous authors now forbidden on school library shelves, and the Reagan Administration planning to modify and emasculate the Freedom of Information Act. And in addition, American writers have problems familiar on this side of the Atlantic:

cuts in government grants to the arts, and marketing techniques which threaten the very existence of the minority writer, the literary novelist and the poet.

The organizers of the Congress had promised action, and apart from a Continuations Committee dedicated to following through motions passed at the Plenary Session, the main focus on the activist front had been the idea of forming a writers' union. I had been invited as a representative from the Writers' Guild of Great Britain to speak on the British experience of union action, and there were several other representatives from writers' unions in Europe — Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Germany.

In fact a great many of the participants were primarily journalists who, with absolutely no equivalent of our NUJ, are highly vulnerable to editorial practices which are almost unheard of in this country. Non-payment, "kill fees" and multiple rewrites figured among their grievances; rather pathetically, a journalist from the *Village Voice* explained how the staff were "allowed" to voice their grievances to management, as though this was a major breakthrough in labour relations. I listened in a state of shock.

As for the idea of forming an American union for writers, this is clearly gathering momentum. Achievements that seemed minimal to European writers sounded almost Utopian to American participants, who were dazzled by the concept of Public Lending Right, amazed at the idea of belonging to an organization that would protect you from publishers who attempted to break their contracts. The information I was able to give them of the British experience of book writers' collective action over the past decade was of particular value, since we share not only a common language but many of the same problems. It struck me that the American writers' situation was very much what ours had been ten years ago, and that they could profit from our experience. Those who came to listen clearly felt the same way: the resolution to endorse the formation of a national writers' union was passed to prolonged and enthusiastic applause.

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**Oxford University Press**



## commentary

## De bello Triffido

By T. A. Shippey

The Day of the Triffids  
BBC TV

John Wyndham had the amiable if surprising habit (for a man who won his spurs in pulp magazines) of centring his later and most successful stories on Latin tags. *The Midwich Cuckoos* ends with Gordon Zellaby intoning *Si fueris Romae, Romanus vivito more* (subjunctive and all), while the key phrase for *The Day of the Triffids* is Fulvius's *Cicero in patria lucus res imperat omnia*. "In the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king." In Wyndham's book this is furthermore only an excuse for a seminar on the meaning of *patria*, not "country" so much as "organized State", the thing that the new imagined blind world has pre-eminently lost. But it must have been obvious from very much earlier to Douglas Livingstone, adapting Wyndham's book for the BBC TV serial, that all this kind of thing had got to go. Was there enough left?

The point is that for all its moving, man-eating plants and retina-burning rays, *The Day of the Triffids* is a novel of argument, not action; and the argument is about, first, whether "survival of the fittest" is the only law, and second, whether there is any ethical belief that remains valid under all circumstances. Are the triffids Super-beings? They don't look it, but if you asked a tiger to design the next stage of evolution it would probably think in terms of longer teeth and faster acceleration. Our notion that Supermen ought to have bigger brains could be just as unimaginatively parochial. Perhaps the next step – so Wyndham suggested – could be in terms of simplicity. To survive, a man needs food, clothes, shelter, fire, sanitation, government, a *patria*. . . . All a triffid needs is its sting. That could make it "fitter". Better? As for the point about ethics, in the book a key scene is the lecture by a professor of sociology to the few sighted people left, on the theme of *autres temps, autres mœurs* and the relativity of ethics – leading to the assertion that blind women post-catastrophe are primarily baby-factories. Around it lie a string of

scenes in which people escape from, or succumb to, the fatal grasp of ethical conservatism, the belief that "what's right's right".

The serial in fact kept a great deal of this with astonishing and praiseworthy fidelity. But arguments, debates and most of all explanations are just not visual. What was Livingstone to do? He solved his problem of scene-setting in episode 1 by deft use of flashback and of the cassette recorder – one of several neat updates of the 1951 book – for Bill Masen to dictate his thoughts and memories to. After that, TV's strong card was the visual impact of familiar scenes turning wild and threatening, like a paranoid's dream. The football supporters shouting "I want a woman" are pretty everyday. The shock-turning-to-gratification of the one who gets one – because she's blind and his mate still has eyes – removes the sportive veneer from it very thoroughly. Hands groping for door handles, the adroit use of moral blackmail to turn kindness into an expensive vice: all this made the "breakdown of civilization" sequences even more convincing and economical.

The triffids themselves were harder, and yet they are the crucial factor in the plot. *Day of the Triffids*, like *War of the Worlds*, is about species-conflict, and not just (like John Christopher's *Death of Grass*, for instance) about how people throw off their inhibitions under strain. Without the triffids, John Wyndham's plot would turn into a kind of pastoral. The serial perhaps edged in this direction, England seemed to get uncluttered very quickly and rather tidily. Not many bodies lying in the streets; very few shrieks and wails in the night; a distinct Robinson Crusoe element of raiding supermarkets, and a very Habibat feel to the last scene in the taken-over farmhouse. If the country were really overrun by the equivalent of intelligent king cobras, one would expect more of a sense of strain.

As it was, one excruciatingly nail-biting aspect of the serial was the way the characters strolled about in this direction, England seemed to get uncluttered very quickly and rather tidily. Not many bodies lying in the streets; very few shrieks and wails in the night. If triffids were real, one would have expected a lot of nervous inquiry as to whether they were ever

nocturnal. But Livingstone and the director, Ken Hannam, did not get their cust to show constant tension. Maybe the wish-fulfilment side of the plot ("in the country of the blind the two-eyed man can have anything he likes") just proved too strong.

This is not to carp about the actors, who to a naive literary eye seemed well cast. John Duttine got just the note of earnest bearded worth for Bill Masen; Maurice Colbourne gave Jack Coker exactly his specified role as a "sensible chap with chip on his shoulder" (and wobbly accent to match). It was a good idea to move Emma Reilly as Jo from short hair and slight mannishness in the first five episodes to long hair and clearer sex-delineation in the last. Gary Olsen as Torrence was convincingly offish at the end: though once again it seemed a slightly anachronistic notion to have this ruthless citizen rubbing it on about feudalism and "ve obvious social and economic structure for ve circumstances" post-Apocalypse. One would have thought that in a real cataclysm the "Citizen Smith" rhetoric would have been an early casualty. In the novel, Torrence, though he does say something very like that, says it harshly and then tells the Masen household they'll have to start eating mashed triffid. Too tough, maybe, for a mid-evening audience.

But then science fiction is usually a hard-boiled genre, especially with large doses of Darwin added, and commonly has to be toned down, if not docked, for the general reader or viewer. *The Midwich Cuckoos*, for instance, came out a good deal more rapidly, from its inept new title on, as the MGM film *Village of the Damned*. The BBC at least resisted nearly all temptations in that direction, and can hardly be faulted for playing what visual cards they had: empty London streets, close-ups of fleshy, sticky bolts, computer simulation for the bolts from the triffid guns. Still, for all the proverbs to the contrary, words do convey information faster than pictures; perhaps especially if you give them in Latin and then add a not-quite-right English translation. Zellaby's version of the Latin tag quoted at the start ran, "If you want to keep alive in the jungle, you must live as the jungle does". It could stand as an epigraph for most of Wyndham's work.



"Nu Couché", brush and India ink on paper, 1953; from an exhibition of drawings and engravings by Nicolas de Staël at Taraman, 236 Brompton Road, London SW3.

## Piling it on

By Antonia Phillips

Nicolas de Staël  
Tate Gallery

At the time of his suicide in 1955, Nicolas de Staël was enjoying a brilliant reputation on both sides of the Atlantic, and his bold abstract and semi-abstract canvases seemed then as exciting as anything emerging from New York. The reputation has faded; and the exhibition at the Tate Gallery is a welcome opportunity to judge how well his work has stood up to developments in painting over the past quarter-century. The exhibition is a reduced version of the retrospective held earlier this year at the Grand Palais: all of the graphic work and some forty-four oils, mostly later ones, have been left behind. It consists of work which spans only the last fifteen years of intense and obsessive labour – de Staël destroyed all the canvases he had painted before 1940 – and progresses from a figurative style reminiscent of Cézanne, El Greco and Picasso, as in "Portrait of Jeannine", to a form of abstraction indebted to Cubism (and so less close to the slap and trickle of New York painting than it might at first seem), with a gradual return to figurative representation.

Until 1949, de Staël's paintings are visions of torment, dark, impenetrable vortices, with sticks painfully crossed and barred. The paintwork is astonishingly heavy – grim and greasy earth-colours, evil greens, tans, occasional dabs of scarlet or white, applied layer upon layer with thick and not always clean brushes – reinforcing the sense of a world crashing in, echoed in titles like "La vie dure", "Porte sans porte", "Bâtons rompus", "Barrière". During this period de Staël suffered extremes of poverty and depression (what sacrifices can have been made to pay for all that paint?). In 1946 his companion Jeannine Guillou died of an illness which was traced to malnutrition – her painting had supported the couple much of the time.

Material circumstances improved as de Staël's paintings began to be shown and to sell, and in the pictures the despair also eases. The planes open up, lose their acute angles in favour of more restful rectangles; the space flattens, the palette lightens to include subtle greys and whites, blues, mustard yellow and khaki. The paint is plastered and knifed and built up into thick separate slabs, in the fissures between which can be seen canvas and traces of earlier layers, inspiring an almost geological fascination with the picture surface. How long did de Staël allow the paint to dry before knifing on another colour? Did the layers get built up evenly over the whole canvas? – It is as if the top layer is one painting, with yet others beneath it. Sometimes one is tempted to draw one's hand down the canvas to

feel the crust of paint, smooth, streaked, gritty, creviced.

This period produced some rich harmonies of colour, with on the whole less contrast and highlighting than in much of de Staël's work: one thinks of "Composition 1950", "Grande composition bleue 1951", "Parce de Seaux". In this period, too, there is a strong Cubist influence – Braque, a close friend and mentor was both – in the way vertical and horizontal planes interlock in a knot, often at the centre of the picture, in the way the picture is conceived as a built up object, in the subdued tonality. The size of de Staël's canvases varies from tiny to enormous, but he himself seems to have preferred to paint large: "Je n'ai de réels élan qu'en grands formats", he wrote to his dealer, Jacques Dubourg.

The final four or five years also reveal two other trends in de Staël's then so controversial reassertion of figurative. Although he had travelled widely in Europe and North Africa, and seen "des kilomètres carrés de mosaïques", he was particularly impressed with a 1951 show in Paris of mosaics from Ravenna. In some of his paintings the figure is pieced together by smallish, close-packed blocks of contrasting colour against a more uniform ground ("Fleurs", "Fleurs sur un fond noir"). In some cases, including some of the famous football paintings, his palette, with its prussian blues and strident reds, is more suggestive of stained glass than mosaic.

At the same time, and increasingly, de Staël's constant interest in land and seascape brought a new expansiveness – broad, often horizontal planes, and contemplative, almost like the view, perhaps, from his studio at Antibes, into which he one day flung himself. In the late still-lives, despite the comforting familiar objects – *coins d'hôtel* or *de cuisine* – one also senses an abyss in the separateness and mushy instability of the objects. It is not difficult to agree with de Staël himself about some of these late paintings: "évidemment parfois c'est trop esquissé sans être esquissé, sur des prés c'est rien . . . Il faut s'habituer, à finir plus sans finir, ce n'est pas facile".

## to the editor

## Judging the Booker Prize

Sir, – Much could be written concerning the Booker McConnell Prize in this and future years which would be more fruitful than the complaints about my report in *The Guardian* which occupy half of Hermione Lee's article (October 30). Our feelings are far less important than the award and the novels involved.

The prize has now been established for thirteen years. Its prestige has grown, and possibly its selections have become less eccentric. Perhaps there is some correlation between the responsibility of the judges and the attention paid to their judgments.

This year's judges were concerned because comparatively little publicity attended a season when a feast of good novels was set before us. How to do justice to that feast? From a critical point of view, to bestow an accolade worth £10,000 on one novel and nothing on its siblings is absurd; it makes sense, however, in the usual competition terms: that the exercise is good for everyone. And despite some absurdities, to which we bow, the Booker is good – possibly vital – for English novelists. It should therefore be made as much a subject of general interest as possible. We all discussed this problem: I acted.

A dead period, a month without news, has always separated the announcement of the short-list from the announcement of the winner. Such interest as the short-list has engendered (this year almost nil) dies in that hibernatory period. My report terminated that dormancy, awakening the attention the Booker needs. Incidentally, I asked the Booker administrator, Marilyn Goff, for permission to write my piece, but naturally did not lay on him any responsibility for having to comment. I sent a copy before publication to our chairman, Malcolm Bradbury – then just back from the States – and he made no complaint to me about it.

My "revelations" had a precedent last year, in an article by Margaret Forster, who obviously felt as I do that it is pretentious for Booker judges to have to behave as if they were a government department, sworn to secrecy. Why should judges not be answerable, as novelists also learn to be? As for naming names, novelists already have to endure ordeal by review, often by condescending critics who may know their subject as well as the novelists themselves. They could not be too disturbed to learn that their book was seriously considered, even if it did not reach the top of the pile. Any argument that they should be shielded from such dangers because they did not enter their novels because they submitted their novels for review in *The Observer*, or wherever. These are jobs publishers undertake.

A desire not to be accountable is in part a desire to present the final verdict as if it enshrines some unchallengeable truth about the novel (and perhaps it does: time will tell; certainly our chairman devised an excellent method of winnowing the year's novels. The composition of the jury, too, virtually guaranteed disagreement, but I believe we all enjoyed those challenging meetings. Our short-list is an interesting one; though one may wonder if realist novels, such as Alan Judd's *A Breed of Heroes*, would stand much chance of reaching it.

It is all very well to discourse in abstract terms about a novel, expounding the new types of metaphorical structure it deploys, but novels also represent something outside themselves. Such matters as whether the role of the British Army in Northern Ireland (*A Breed of Heroes*) or Mrs Gandhi in India (*Midnight's Children*), or of Sigmund Freud in Europe (*The White Hotel*), are effectively portrayed within the novel concerned also have relevance.

This year (and possibly every year) the English novel confounds the old charge that it looks only inward at itself; yet the suspicion remains that this is what some perfectionists would like it to do. When novelists address themselves to the classroom only, then indeed *The Novel* will be dead, and the judges will keep silent.

Such questions – and the teaser about whether the short-list should enshrine six or seven novels, all with an equal chance of winning, or should carry a concealed winner like a joker and five other favourites, which together represent a spectrum of achievement – will exercise juries every year. Our experience this year suggests that preliminary meetings are necessary before sifting procedures begin.

There exists a literate general audience in this country which would be deeply interested in such deliberations. The argument about broadcasting judicial debates, whether on radio or TV, apparently rests on the vain notion that "No one could resist temptation to appear wittier, more authoritative, more sympathetic than their colleagues". The public is brighter than some academics imagine and would see through such ploys as readily as they do in parliamentary broadcasts. Here is a unique opportunity for readers to listen to five fairly well-informed people discussing a year's harvest of noteworthy novels. Perhaps some pain might be suffered (isn't it always?), but literary life would be enriched. At the least, such scrutiny would prevent judges bending their own self-imposed rules.

The impartiality of judges must always be subject to examination. We have to resist a natural impulse to back our friends, whose writings we know best, and we have to resist being impressed simply because a novel bears a respected author's name. These are two questions which most concern the public, to judge by my current postbag. They caused us trouble this year.

Those personal short-lists, which *The Guardian* and *The Sunday Times* kindly published, were my equivalent of the postcards which our chairman suggested should be sent to several writers to whom we were not quite able to award Alphas in our serious game. They were, in other words, designed to cheer – a gleam in the rough weather novelists are now enduring. My impulse was admiration for excellent writing, not contempt for my hard-working fellow judges.

BRIAN ALDISS,

16 Moreton Road, Oxford OX2 7AX.

## 'Renaissance Self-Fashioning'

Sir, – In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Stephen Greenblatt writes: "We need, at this level, bring nothing to the text but ourselves" (page 179). He complains (Letters, September 25) about my ellipsis of "at this level". But he must really accept that there is a standpoint (mine, for example) from which these are not at all "crucial words". The view I tried to express (September 4) was that we may not treat Elizabethans as our contemporaries on any "level" at all – certainly not at the level in question, namely, a tendentious interpretation of Spenser's allegory. Even moral, political and psychological terms have altered. In Tudor times, for example, the distinction between Spanish and English colonial methods (a distinction to which Mr Greenblatt never, I think, refers) was of some importance.

He believes that he has proved falsification by supplying the continuation. "Fuller" understanding, however, requires that we confront not only personal history but the history of peoples. But his next sentence again is: "We must, as Chifford Geertz suggests, incorporate the work of art into the texture of a particular pattern of life, a collective

experience that transcends it and completes its meaning." And it is just here that my objection to his method arises: for the work of art is not there to be "incorporated" until it is constructed by the reader. Now, that construction can be right or wrong. And, if we regard Tudor works as written today, we are liable to take them in quite inappropriate, perhaps opposite, senses (something I exemplified from Mr Greenblatt's book in my review).

As to my anachronistic use of the term "third world", here I must confess to having been ironical. (Even modern English has its hermeneutic perils.) I mean to suggest the sort of blurring that Mr Greenblatt's way of modernizing leads to. Perhaps I should conclude by saying that I sympathize with his wish to find modern equivalents to Tudor issues.

ALASTAIR FOWLER.

Department of English Literature, University of Edinburgh, David Hume Tower, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9JX.

## Seventeenth-Century Drama

Sir, – Since your readers may infer from the prominence you accord it that William P. Williams's letter (October 23) contains points of substance, let me point out (a) that no one who reads my review with any care could deduce from it that no plays were performed during the Puritan Revolution, and (b) that the question whether Richard Royston and Humphrey Mosley can legitimately be described as printers rather than booksellers or publishers does not affect my argument. Mr Williams will find an introduction to Mosley's royalism in P. W. Thomas's *Sir John Berkehead* (1969).

BLAIR WORDEN.

St Edmund Hall, Oxford OX1 4AR.

## Misprints in Books

Sir, – I was sorry to read of the misfortunes of Michael Kennedy (Letters, October 23). The reasons he gives for the steadily increasing numbers of misprints in books are correct, I have no doubt. How much better, in this respect, was the previous method of hot-metal setting where corrections were incorporated in lines of type metal which could be read and substituted for incorrect lines with nearly perfect reliability.

We have stayed with letter-press production methods, as opposed to photo-composition. Galley-proofs are returned to us from the publisher with, on average, three errors per galley-proof of 120 lines. Our page-on-galley proofs average less than one error per galley of three pages. All printers should be able to achieve this standard without extra cost.

What is needed is for authors and publishers to insist on seeing revised or ozalids from the printers. No extra cost should be involved since corrections not incorporated are done at the printer's expense. There should be no delay in production because the publisher would not continue to use a printer who misses scheduled dates through his own carelessness.

CASPAR STANDING.

Daedalus Press, Somers Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 1JF.

Sir, – Fair's fair, though, I agree with Michael Kennedy's letter (October 23), but, so far, at least one Scottish firm is exemplary – perhaps I mean splendidly old-fashioned. A 382-page biography of mine published last year by Oxford University Press and printed by Morrison & Gibb had very few errors in proof, of which four tiny ones I was aware because I was moving house at the time, but the twelve-page index, in proof and on publication, had no errors at all that I could see. It would be interesting to know which

publishers now read proofs, as some have done ever since it was realized that both printers' and authors' proofreading can be pretty decey. Many authors are just not the proof-reading type, but surely it's a printer's business to be so?

PRISCILLA METCALF,  
37 Gainsborough House, Erasmus  
Street, London SW1.

## Railway Timetables

Sir, – I fear that a sentence in my review of British Rail's Continental Timetable (Summer 1981), published in the *TLS* of October 23, may have unwittingly misled those of your readers who hope to travel to Spain or, for that matter, France. May I beg for space to disentangle my remarks on the location of La Tour de Carol-Enveigt?

Since this looks at first as if it might be a German or Austrian town, I observed happily that British Rail's new system for indexing destinations by name of town rather than country by country would enable passengers alighting at La Tour de Carol-Enveigt to discover that they were in fact in Spain. A correspondent has now kindly pointed out to me that this town is actually in France.

Worse, I suggested that, although the Paris-Alicante service appears to rush straight through, La Tour de Carol-Enveigt lurks in the thirty-one-mile stretch between Port-Bou and Flaxa. My correspondent, who gives all the local stations and declares that this is a very interesting route, tells me that La Tour de Carol-Enveigt is not on the Paris-Alicante line at all; it is on a sort of headstrong spur running between Toulouse and Barcelona.

I have studied the decision tree which British Rail has thoughtfully placed at the beginning of the *France/Iberia* section of the Timetable and, sure enough, La Tour de Carol-Enveigt hovers just above the Spanish side of the border. It is, however, floating over a pocket, shown in dotted lines, which may indicate that it is the main junction for some autonomous region. The train to take is the *Catalan-Talgo*, not the *Mare Nostrum*. It is air-conditioning and knives and forks in squares (tray meals).

JANET MORGAN,  
Home Close, Emsfield, Oxon.

## Nuclear War

Sir, – Elizabeth Young uses the excuse of a previous book review to formulate a logical syllogism on the subject of nuclear war and disarmament (Letters, October 23). Using the excuse of her letter, I must point out that her conclusion may be "valid" but is quite wrong.

It is based on the familiar and quite silly assertion that unilateral disarmament is a mistake because so far no nuclear Power or Super-power has ever been attacked by either nuclear or conventional forces. The operative phrase, of course, is "so far". This argument is reminiscent of the man who jumped off the Empire State Building, and as he passed each floor on his rapid descent was heard to cry "All right so far, all right so far . . ."

I agree with Ms Young that general disarmament must be the ultimate goal but this does not preclude, in the world's present ominous straits, some possibilities of unilateral disarmament and/or nuclear-free zones. She has fallen into a trap which awaits all those who seek to use pure logic to deal with concrete and very dangerous realities – what is needed is sweet reason and common sense.

IAN WEBSTER.

36 Glyn Way, Threemilestone, Truro, Cornwall TR3 6DT.

An *Introduction to Modern Political Theory*, by Norman F. Barry, which was reviewed in our issue of September 18, is also published by Macmillan in paperback at £4.95; only the hardback price of £12.50 was mentioned in the review.

## 'Images of Chelsea'

Sir, – May I defend a young bibliographer against what I believe to be the most irresponsible criticism in your columns? I am publishing a series of books, under the title "Images of London", each of which aims to reproduce all the printed views of an area of London up to 1860 and any of particular interest with topographical content after that date. I have commissioned Jonathan Ditchburn to undertake the massive task of compiling the catalogue of prints which forms the bulk half of each volume. The first title, *Images of Chelsea*, was reviewed on February 31 by J. Morland Crook.

Dr Crook rightly identified Mr Ditchburn's catalogue as the academic heart of the matter but dismissed it as disappointing because of its omissions, of which he listed some apparently glaring examples. The most important were several etchings by Theodore Rousseau; a print of "Pugin's Chelsea home"; and the fact that "inevitably perhaps, there is no record of every state of every print". Since the form of the catalogue is specifically designed to distinguish the many differing states of views published before 1860 by the commercial printmakers (a task not previously attempted), the last was a particularly serious failing. I therefore wrote to Dr Crook asking if we could have details of the missing prints for our files.

Dr Crook replied promptly, saying that as he was an expert on prints he had sought the advice of a friend in an Oxford bookshop, and that for further information I should also consult this friend. My letter to the friend brought no response for two months, whereupon Dr Crook apologized for his friend's eccentricities which included not answering letters, and having tea most days from 3.45 to 4.15 with the Costume and Textile Department of Christie's, South Kensington, where I might well catch him. A letter to the eccentric at tea time proved equally unsuccessful, and I told Dr Crook of a growing suspicion that his criticisms might be without foundation. I added that I was considering writing in complaint to the *TLS*. This he declared to be pointless, on the grounds that his friend's eccentricities included not reading the *TLS*. My reply that Dr Crook perhaps read the *TLS*, and had written the review, finally brought some further details of Mr Ditchburn's omissions.

Dr Crook pointed to thirty-four Chelsea prints, listed as such in a catalogue of Rousseau's work, of which Mr Ditchburn had only included eighteen; but he checked the list and had included all that were remotely topographical (the others are of such Chelsea subjects as Mrs Cyprian Williams in fancy dress). The print of the Pugin house, a Cheyne Walk (not Pugin's home, but gotichized by him for a patron) turned out to be a rough stereotyped wood-engraving (twenty-seven years after our period, from the *Building News* of 1887; however the association would have justified inclusion, and this could be called an omission. As to the variant states of the earlier prints, Dr Crook advised – without further detail – that it might be helpful to look in the Bodleian and the Ashmolean. In such rich collections, full of extra-illustrated volumes, there may well lurk states and even prints unknown to Mr Ditchburn – as apparently also to Dr Crook.

Dr Crook said that omissions were inevitable. True enough, in a catalogue listing nearly 900 prints and variant states on a previously unattempted subject. What I would question is the balance of a review in which an unsupported and largely irrelevant attack on such inevitable omissions is made, while not a word is said about the extent and organization of what is actually in the catalogue; and the sense of responsibility of a reviewer who sends a serious book off to a friend to get an opinion on the main subject-matter about which, as he later privately admits, he himself knows little.

BAMBER GASCOIGNE,  
Saint Helena Press, 1 Saint Helena Terrace, Richmond, Surrey.



# Trying to grow the Freudian way

By Eric Korn

JOHN IRVING:  
The Hotel New Hampshire  
401pp. Cape. £6.95.  
0 254 01961 9

Lurching glumly to the end of this joyless romp, the reviewer finds a surge of pectorals to hand; narcissistic, ponderous, cute, brutal, reluctant, self-defending, vulgar, popular, American... At which point alarm bells start to ring in the critical command centre.

It's easy to despise a certain gauche defiance, an un-Englishly energetic ambition. What exactly is it? If Irving seems heartless, so does Waugh; if his characters are robotic, so are Orwell's; if he kills them off with abandon, so did Shakespeare; if he is extravagant, so was Melville; if he is long, so is Art; if he is untrue to real life, so is Real Life.

None of which reconciles me to the style Irving adopts here, a diction consistently ungracious, sometimes ungrammatical ("to we children"), slung and reluctant. Here a terrorist gang is about to blow up the Vienna Opera House; the narrator observes:

On the Kärntnerstrasse across from the Opera was a sausage vendor, a man with a kind of hot-dog cart selling different kinds of Würstl mit Senf und Bawerndor - a kind of sausage with mustard on rye. I didn't want one.

It would be hard to imagine anything more inessential than a description of the sort of sausage that the hero doesn't want at a critical juncture; and all those "kinds" make us less than kin. Sometimes Irving can cram a great deal of redundancy into a small compass: "The band was named either after Doris or after the mild hurricane of some years before - which was also named Doris. The

band was called, naturally, Hurricane Doris." Naturally.

Irving has either chosen this style deliberately or is suffering from fatty degeneration of the prose, for he was capable of other styles: *The 158-pound Marriage* is almost laconic, and *The Water-Method Man* has a donnish wit. (My brisk jog through the *oeuvre* of Irving tested and dismissed two hypotheses: that my pleasure varied inversely with the length of the book or directly with the order of publication. The one I like least is not the longest. The one I like most is not the earliest.)

A plot-summary sounds ludicrous, though no more than the plot in *extenso*. In 1939 Win Berry, kind, vague and given to dumb enthusiasms, gets to know Mary (kind, strong, unclouded) when both have summer jobs at a resort hotel in Maine. Here also he meets the unsuccessful animal-trainer from Vienna, wittily nicknamed Freud (is there a thought here about the unconscious as rough beast? Sure.) He buys "Freud's" vast assets, a handsome motorbike and an uncooperative bear; he marries the girl and tours with the bear and the motorbike, occasionally returning home to beget Frank, Franny, John (the narrator), Lily and Egg. When the bear is accidentally shot, he buys an abandoned girl's school and runs it - calamitously - as a hotel. "Freud" reappears and Win sells the hotel to a midge circus, but not before his father, the old football coach Iowa Bob, dies of shock after happening unprepared on the overenthusiastically stuffed cadaver of Sorrow, the family Labrador put to sleep (for excessive farting) on the very day Franny was raped by the football team. The family (less Mother and Egg, who die in an air crash) move to Vienna, and Win partners "Freud" in running a hotel of spectacular seediness where the permanent residents are whores at the lower-middle range of the market and revolutionaries similarly placed, and where the concierge is a tough-minded but

unhappy lesbian in a bear suit. The revolutionaries turn out to be more realistic than they seem: the family folk a bomb plot, but "Freud" is killed and Win blinded. With the proceeds of the sale of the hotel, and an advance on Lily's memoirs, he goes to New York and buys the old abandoned Maine hotel, pretending to run it - a pious fraud to humour the blind father. Lily kills herself, Frank is gay but cheerful, Franny and Johnny are briefly lovers, curing themselves of their incestuous passion by consummating it in a single session with improbable frequency and with increasing discomfort, after which Franny becomes a success playing herself in the film of their story, and the mock-hotel becomes a rape crisis centre. The moral seems to be that if you don't die you survive.

The symbols are jokes, the jokes symbols; and both are hammered into the ground, or should I say screwed to the floor, like the girl's school furniture in the first hotel. "Everything's screwed down here" says Iowa Bob and keeps on saying it till his unfortunate accident. We tire of this and the other comic family catchphrases: "Keep on putting the open windows." "You've got to get obsessed and stay obsessed" (there's no pleasure in spotting key phrases in this book, since Irving enlightens them garishly), or "four hundred and sixty four" - which is the number of acts of love performed by Arthur Schnitzler and Jeanette Hegger in the 1888-89 season.

Some of Irving's best and worst jokes depend on the literal realization of metaphor. Sorrow the dog and sorrow the emotion recur - doggedly. "Sorrow floats", we are told, and the narrator's first sexual prospect finds the half-burnt canine in the bath, dead but buoyant, "while she is diagnosing herself" - an unlovely expression, if not quite as gross as "unpanted" from *Grp*. ("If the world would stop indulging wars

and famines and other perils, it would still be possible for human beings to embarrass each other to death"). The dead dog reappears in the debris of the plane crash. Questions of taste aside, if you give the name Sorrow to a farting Labrador it is quite easy to make comical references. If you choose to make a fictional character "Freud" it is surely slightly unkind to make a number of "who said that, our Freud or the other one?" jests. (In my forthcoming *Groundwork for a Structuralist Phenomenology of the Joke*, a dismissive chapter is devoted to jokes that invest a large improbable datum for a small return in amusement.)

The interchange of metaphor and fact, of real and mock - especially real and mock sex, real and mock violence - seems to be Irving's chief

concern. The joke revolutionaries can kill; and Screaming Annie's fake orgasms, which arouse (or at least awaken) the whole hotel, turn out to be real after all. Mockery can heal - Franny exorcizes her rape by subjecting the chief rapist to a ludicrously sinister masquerade in which the whole family joins. But it can also kill - in one of the few passages written with real passion, the narrator speaks of the terrorist as "simply another kind of pornographer". The pornographer pretends he is disgusted by his work; the terrorist pretends he is uninterested in the means... but they are both lying.

Critics of Irving who complain that he treats his characters inhumanly, and also that his characters are lifeless simulacra, are trying to have it both ways. But so is Irving.

## Fearful delicacies

By Carol Rumens

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER:  
Scenes of Childhood  
and Other Stories  
177pp. Chatto and Windus. £6.50.  
0 7011 2516 0

"Did this really happen or didn't it? Now own up!" is hardly the sort of question a polite reviewer puts to an author of fiction. It is generally tacitly agreed that such considerations are beside the artistic point, however fascinating in almost every other respect. Nevertheless, the churning of these posthumously-collected New Yorker pieces as "stories" jarred this unwary reader into a mood of quibbling. Delightfully relaxed yet fresh and alert in voice, they have all the air of being reminiscences, and none of the air of being short stories, even in the loosest sense. This is certainly not to imply that no trace of invention colours their pages, nor that they are not superbly, if unnoticeably, crafted. But it is to suggest that the decision to market them as fiction is a disservice that initially sets writer and reader at odds, rousing false expectations as to style and range. This said, it must be admitted that such is Sylvia Townsend Warner's artistry as a raconteur that the quibble dissolves into pure joy after a paragraph or two. One is thrilled to have these pieces, however they are classified.

Under such disarming headings as "My Father, My Mother, the Butler, the Builder, the Poodle and I" and "Stanley Sherwood, or the Fireman's Revenge", Townsend Warner airs the glamorous and charming eccentricities of her upper middle-class background with a telling irony. Her material is presented in a way that seems effortlessly natural, with none of the coyness and snobbishness that might have infected a lesser writer (and, one is tempted to add, lesser person). A ghastly butler can be mocked with moral impunity, since at the same time he is presented as an individual, a person with his own peculiar integrity; and because, too, the world of which butlers are a part is treated with equal stringency.

"She" (Sylvia's mother) "had always wanted a butler and a chinchilla, and in one year, in a sudden access of prosperity, she received them both. As for the chinchilla, she had portions of it; yet, when I saw it last it was ornamenting a negligee. Not a shred of Stanley Sherwood is preserved in the family, I'm glad to say." Such a writer, clearly, can be accused of snobbishness no more than, say, Philip Roth can be accused of anti-semitism.

It is easy to place too much emphasis on the Wodehousean quality of her social world and not enough on her more private perceptions. The book is in fact shot through with a dark sense of morality and the passing of time. One of the most disturbing, though far from humorous, anecdotes hovers with fearful delicacy round the approaching death of a cheerful and stylish young cohenman,

Ted Hooper, laid low by tuberculosis.

And then all of a sudden - for he was in such demand and such a willing servant that he went on driving long after he should have been at home nursing that tireless cough - he was no longer erect and cocked in upper air but felled and flattened on a bed, and being spoken of deplorably, and almost as though he were a dead person already.

This alternation of an intensely felt emotion and a sharp, ironical criticism of the limitations of a particular society is the crux of Townsend Warner's art.

But the prevailing mood of the collection is undoubtedly sunny. Its author's wit can be devastating: "Major Beldam was, as my mother's fashion magazine would have put it, a simple confection in red and grey". Animals have a minor but significant role, and their quirkiness is often more than a match for that of the humans: Lord Kitchener ("the only cat I ever knew who chewed his own moustaches") gives Sylvia's mother a "biting, monosyllabic glance". Sometimes the narrative is interrupted to let us look into another world, rich and strange as a stained glass window or a magic box. One hilarious anecdote concerning Lord Kitchener and the mouse he fails to catch ends with a sudden marvellous evocation of life in an Indian nursery, experienced as if at first hand by the young Sylvia via her mother's recollections:

It was to me that the man fishing in the Aydar river gave the little pink and yellow fish which I afterwards laid away among my mother's nightdresses alone in a darkened room under a swaying punkah. It was I who made sweet-scented necklaces by threading horse-hair through the tamarind blossoms which fell on the garden's watered lawn... It was I whom the twirling masoola boat carried through the surf to the P and O liner, on that first stage of a journey towards an unknown land which was called home.

That supreme gift, displayed to the full in the novels, of capturing the very light and smell of places as dissimilar as a South Sea island and the Essex marshes, is tantalisingly glimpsed in such passages. They remind us that Sylvia Townsend Warner was a poet too, and that it is a poet's awareness of verbal nuance that helps give her prose its unusual distinctness.

Half of *PN Review* 23, currently on sale (65pp, 22) is given over to "Sylvia Townsend Warner: A Celebration", edited by Claire Harman. Among the items included are eleven poems by Sylvia Townsend Warner, an interview with the writer conducted by Val Warner and Michael Schmidt, personal recollections by Bea Howe, Paul Blinding and George D. Painter, letters between Sylvia Townsend Warner and David Garnett, and critical estimations of her prose and poetry by Glen Cavaliero, J. Lawrence Mitchell and Martin Seymour-Smith.

FRANK M. TURNER:  
The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain

461pp. Yale University Press. £18.90.  
0 300 02480 0

As a preparation for reviewing Grote's *Plato*, and the *Other Companions of Socrates*, J.S. Mill reread Plato's entire corpus, in Greek. I must confess to experiencing a similar impulse before tackling Frank M. Turner's massive, and extraordinarily learned, new study. As he rightly remarks, "what the historian knows is often quite unfamiliar to the classicist, and what the latter knows so well about Homer or Athens is normally foreign to the general scholar of Victorian Britain". By his own admission no classicist, he nevertheless has a formidable grasp of the patterns underlying nineteenth-century classical scholarship. His ideal reviewer would come to *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* fresh (if fresh is the *mot juste*) from a reassessment not only of the Platonic corpus, but also of Homer, Thucydides, Aristotle's *Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Athenian Constitution*, Grote's *History of Greece*, the *gesammelte Schriften* of the Möllers (both Max and Karl Otfried), Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*, and a good deal beside, including, if time permitted, the more lunatic Homeric lubrications of W.E. Gladstone. Professor Turner has prepared himself for the task he has undertaken with quite relentless thoroughness.

It comes, then, as something of a relief to find that this formidable exponent of *Geistesgeschichte*, aided and abetted by the editors and proof-readers of the Yale University Press, is capable of overlooking nearly eighty gross typographical solecisms in an otherwise nicely produced book. Some of these have a surreal charm all their own. "Commerical" for "commercial" carries an appropriately clerical overtone, while "superstition" for "superstition" (twice repeated) suggests some demented Great Whore of Babylon. Others, alas, can hardly be written off as mere careless proof-correction. Turner habitually spells Wilamowitz "Williamovitz", and talks without a blush, throughout, of Aristotle's *Nichomachian* (sic) *Ethics*. He also supposes that tyrannus is the Greek for a tyrant, that the English for *prymneia* is "Prytannery", that the verb "eschew" is spelled without a c, and that there is a Latin phrase *ad hominum*. Rarely have I come across a scholar who was so slipshod in small matters yet so meticulous over great ones. Accents may be misplaced or omitted, foreign words and scholars' names misspelled, and literals scattered like manna on page after page; yet *factual* slips are virtually non-existent, and unimportant where they occur (Alcibiades, for instance, was never accused of Hermi-mutilation, and his worst enemies were not the oligarchs: this makes no difference to Turner's arguments). Such venial faults in an otherwise dazzling monument of investigative scholarship merely serve to make the author appear human like the rest of us; they can easily be eradicated in a second edition.

It is inevitable that this volume should be compared with Richard Jenkyns' *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, which I reviewed earlier in these columns (February 20, 1981) - not least since between them they go a long way towards filling what had been a surprising lacuna in both English cultural history and classical *Rezeptionsgeschichte*. By serendipitous accident they complement each other very well, and, further, suggest with some eloquence, through their contrasts and omissions, just how vastly complex and in many ways elusive a subject they are dealing with: controversial too. Jenkyns' forte is for social history, pure literature, and the visual arts; Turner primarily concerns himself with the history of ideas, as manifested in the interpretation, and application, of

Greek political, religious, or mythological phenomena. He is using the Victorians' attitude to classical antiquity as an instrument for probing Victorian intellectual life. He is not concerned, and tells us so, with "Greek mythology or allusions to Greek culture as displayed in Victorian poetry and literary prose": here he stands in sharp contrast to Jenkyns, whose investigation of George Eliot's use of classical symbolism in her novels constitutes a critical *tour de force*. Nor does Turner deal with the role of the classics in Victorian education, or (wisely, I would judge) with the technical side, linguistic or philological, of classical scholarship.

Thus both Turner and Jenkyns have areas where they overlap little

term of abuse. The constant ex-

planation one derives from observing Turner's crystalline analytical mind distinguishing between Victorian hawks and hand-saws is tempered, finally, by his overall conclusions, with the massive, detailed, meticulous, and (in the end) relentless documentation which accompanies them: that "disinterested or dispassionate criticism was simply not the order of the day"; that the Victorians, almost without exception, used the ancient world as back-up material for their own social, moral, religious or political prejudices, while at the same time allowing those prejudices totally to dictate the interpretations they formulated of classical authors and institutions; that

they are any more immune from such influences? In particular, the onset of totalitarianism has intruded a refracting lens that subtly (or not so subtly) modifies our assumptions about antiquity in ways few could have guessed a century ago. Sir Karl Popper's famous assault on Plato is a good case in point: would *The Open Society and its Enemies* have been written with quite such virulent fervour (or even perhaps written at all) had Hitler not invaded Popper's native Austria? Do we not in large measure owe our pervasive concept of Plato-as-totalitarian to the *Anschluss*? What did Rostovtzeff's ideas on the Roman middle classes owe to his traumatic brush with the Russian revolution? How far were

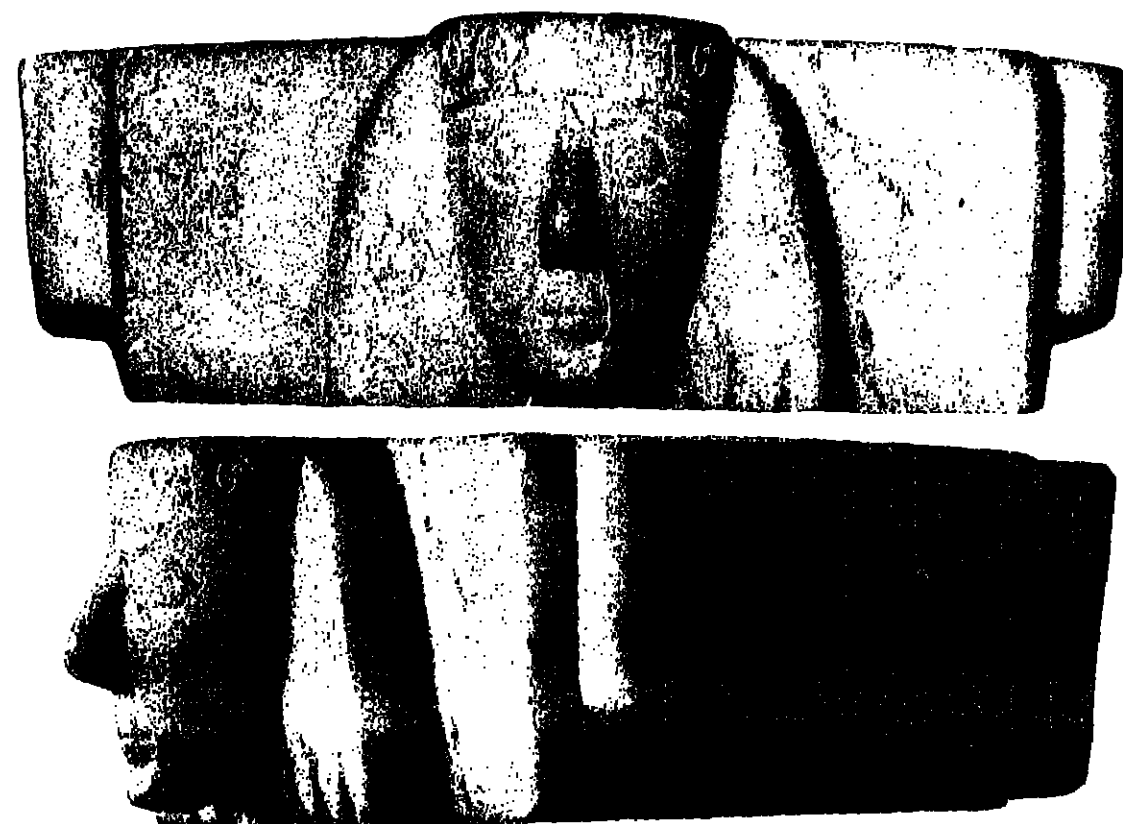
searching for counter-propaganda, turned to Greece, which, having been so little studied, "could represent almost any value or outlook that a writer wished to ascribe to it". It is a nice paradox, not least in an age that parrots the slogans of Greek democratic freedom *ad nauseam*, that the polemical writing of Greek history should have begun in the 1780s as a vehicle for Tory propaganda.

Yet conservatives and radicals, free-thinkers and Christian apologists alike assumed the classical heritage as common property for the purpose of their great debate. As Turner rightly insists, "that now discredited general familiarity with the classics was one of the distinguishing and self-defining marks of the social and intellectual elite of Europe." No longer, alas: one more casualty of a dying aristocratic tradition. The predominance, throughout the nineteenth century, of the Oxford school of Literae Humaniores - Mooks and Grecks - also ensured that generations of statesmen, divines and academics took it for granted that the ancient world and their own enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, moral no less than cultural, that what they thought and wrote about Greece would profoundly affect contemporary political, religious, philosophical and moral discourse. The converse corollary of this assumption - that contemporary beliefs and prejudices must, inevitably, colour their own attitudes to antiquity - seems not to have been grasped with anything like the same degree of certainty.

Yet as the century progressed, the changing interpretations of Greek history, mythology, philosophy and religion must surely have given the more thoughtful some moments of acute self-doubt. Bishop Butler and Bishop Hampden, Hegel and Vico, Max Müller's Aryanism, Utilitarianism, Comte's Aritism, Ruskin, Pater, Bergson, Jung - the gods of the century's headbashes succeeded each other with dizzying speed, new dogmas contradicted old shibboleths, scholarship was public, *engage* (with many scholars doubling as politicians, and vice versa) in a manner reminiscent of the Byzantine theological riots. Those who pride themselves, today, on having achieved a greater degree of objectivity might do well to reflect that this represents not so much the triumphant surmounting of academic bias as an evaporation of interest in what were once burning issues. Where the issues are still alive (eg in Marxist historiography) the distorting sense of committal remains as strong as ever.

Hugh Lloyd-Jones recently (July 24) pointed out in his pages that Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* was meant as an attempt to utilize the understanding of antiquity in order to construct a philosophy for the author's own contemporaries. By now it should be clear that this was no isolated instance: apart from those works of pure scholarship that Turner excludes from his survey (and not even they were always immune: even to edit Plato or Aeschylus meant getting involved in their ideas), it would be hard to find a Victorian essay in ancient history, literature or philosophy that was not, at the same time, in some sense a work of propaganda. The presumed *likeness* of ancient Greeks to the Victorians was a notion "fundamental to Victorian intellectual life", and Turner offers a brilliant analysis of the various devices employed by nineteenth-century thinkers to let them see Greece in their own image, and utilize its culture for their own ends (while at the same time refuting each other's theories with dogmatic vigour: Jowett's unorthodoxes actually got him prosecuted).

To providentialists, the Greeks were precursors of Christianity. Those who, like Thomas Arnold, believed in Vico's cyclic theory of world history could argue that Periclean Athens and Victorian England both represented the apogee of the cycle, and thus should be treated in



These two photographs of a lamp in cycadic marble discovered in the sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros near Selinus are taken from *The Birth of Greek Art: From the Mycenaean to the Archaic period* by Roland Hampe and Erika Simon with a foreword by John Boardman (316pp with 504 illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £35. 0 500 23342 X). The lamp was made in the second half of the seventh century on either the island of Naxos or Paros and was hung up by three loops of rope. It is debatable whether the carved head is male or female, though it has been suggested that the supporting figures of such marble basins were girls. The protruding nose, the girdle around the forehead, the lack of pupils in the carved-out irises and the hair divided into rectangular areas are characteristics of Greek sculpture of the period.

or not at all; Jenkyns on tragedy, poetry in general, painting and the whole matter of *fin-de-siècle* decadence (which he treats as a huge and mildly risqué joke, whereas Turner restricts itself to some asides on the contortions performed by Jowett and other liberal Anglicans over Platonic homosexuality); Turner on the Athenian constitution, Aristotle's *Ethics*, and the seemingly all-pervasive phenomenon of ancient intellectual and moral concepts being used, consciously or unconsciously, as grist for modern religious or political propaganda-mills. Where they do overlap - on Homer, say, or Plato - they tend to take a very different view of the material they are studying. Seldom can two books with a common theme have produced less otiose duplication: a pity their authors could not have collaborated. Turner would be all the better for a measure of Jenkyns's style, broad cultural background and (on internal evidence) sharp eye for misprints; Jenkyns, in turn, could do with Turner's structural tidiness, clarity of exposition, and ability to extract cogent intellectual generalizations from the most complex and disparate material.

No doubt about it, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* is a formidable, and ground-breaking, achievement. It took me a month to read, and thirty-six closely-written pages of notes to digest its essential conclusions - which, in the last resort, seem likely to depress most of us except for dyed-in-the-wool behaviourists or the kind of latter-day ideological sophist for whom "bourgeois objectivism" constitutes a

most high-minded of them were ready to ignore, suppress, distort or domesticate any feature of Greek society that appeared patently at odds with their chosen vision. It is a bleakly pessimistic view of human intellectual endeavour, and there is, I fear, a great deal of truth in it.

Nor (as Turner's study at times half suggests) is this phenomenon by any means restricted to the Victorians. Turner himself shows us, in scarily detail, just how William Mifflin, the eighteenth-century pioneer of Greek historiography in England, the friend of Jeremy Bentham, used classical Athens in particular as a didactic model (and awful warning) to advance Country party doctrine on the virtues of the balanced English constitution and the radical perils of democratic government. Hobbes, who translated Thucydides, took a very similar line. Nor was this practice exclusively English. J.G. Droysen's advocacy of Macedonian dominance under Philip II and Alexander III was directly conditioned by his activities as a rabid monarchist and Prussian nationalist; having, like Grote, ineffectually pursued a parliamentary career, he ended by projecting his frustrated ambitions on to the ancient world, just as he earlier used that world to justify his own political ideology.

If men like Arnold, Grote, Gladstone, Jowett and Burnet were (as Turner amply demonstrates) shaped in their attitudes to Hellenism by the position they took on contemporary political or religious issues, can we claim that the scholars of this cen-

ty were any more immune from such influences? In particular, the onset of totalitarianism has intruded a refracting lens that subtly (or not so subtly) modifies our assumptions about antiquity in ways few could have guessed a century ago. Sir Karl Popper's famous assault on Plato is a good case in point: would *The Open Society and its Enemies* have been written with quite such virulent fervour (or even perhaps written at all) had Hitler not invaded Popper's native Austria? Do we not in large measure owe our pervasive concept of Plato-as-totalitarian to the *Anschluss*? What did Rostovtzeff's ideas on the Roman middle classes owe to his traumatic brush with the Russian revolution? How far were

Till the latter part of the eighteenth century what we may term the Romano-Christian view of the ancient world held the field. Despite such isolated phenomena as the Cambridge Platonists, despite the efforts of pioneers like Colet, Cheke, and Erasmus, Greek culture never really took a firm hold in England at the Renaissance: it is symptomatic that the first translation of Aeschylus only appeared in 1777. Greek interests developed, as Turner reminds us, only when "the values, ideas and institutions inherited from the Roman and Christian past became problematical". A new wind, too, was blowing from Germany, where the *Neue Humanismus* of the University of Göttingen, not content with revolutionizing classical historiography and philology had expanded into the area of Biblical studies, with incalculable consequences: the sharp critical tools thus put into the hands of liberal theologians produced a conservative backlash much akin to that angry panic generated by the teaching of the Sophists in fifth-century Athens. Nor was this groundswell exclusively religious. Political radicalism had come of age: the American and French revolutions were to demonstrate, graphically, just what practical results ideological theory could achieve. Conservatives,



pari materia. Comtean positivists adapted Greek religious and philosophical phenomena to the three-stage model of intellectual development (religious, metaphysical, positivist). Similarly, Hegelians saw in the passage from the archaic to the classical world the triumph of *Moralität* over mere *Sittlichkeit*. As Turner says, "these several philosophies of history did not function in hermetically sealed compartments", nor were those who argued for analogies between Greece and Britain always fully aware of them. For a nation of pragmatists the result was conceptual muddle and steaming emotionalism. But however eclectic their treatment, these notions supplied, one way and another, the framework for a century of polemic and speculation.

It is a great virtue of Turner's method that he approaches his subject not generically, but in linear, evolutionary, historical terms, tracing patterns of influence as they develop. Thus both constants and variables get their proper emphasis. If Victorian thinkers shared one characteristic throughout, it was that of political and intellectual elitism; if they had a constant common enemy, it was the hubbub of commercialism, materialism, and selfish bourgeois Philistinism (very often with romantic or economic modernism thrown in as an antisocial make-weight). To that extent Matthew Arnold had a point. They tended, further, to believe in the uniformity of human nature (if not in the common nature of that uniformity), and to stress moral or ethical values (though seldom from the same standpoint). But this was about the limit of their common ground, as becomes very clear — to take one of Turner's more striking examples — from their treatment of Plato.

Till after 1840 the Platonic corpus, untapped and largely untranslated, lay in a kind of intellectual limbo: Plato's thought was held to be impractical, and thus (as Macaulay

informed readers of the *Edinburgh Review*) irrelevant to an age of progress. (In 1816, during the debate over the Elgin Marbles, the experts consulted came down squarely in favour of realism and naturalism in art: trendy idealism was still waiting in the wings.) A character in Peacock's *Crotchet Castle* (1831) observes that contemporary universities also regarded Plato as "little better than a misleader of youth". In due course, however, liberal Anglicans such as Sewall and Blackie and A.E. Taylor got hold of Plato and used his doctrines to uphold traditional Christian ethics against utilitarianism — whereupon his university status promptly improved. The utilitarians, in turn, employed Plato's moral and political philosophy as a surrogate to replace Christian values: where Taylor had "transformed the Republic into a Hellenic *Pilgrim's Progress*", Grote saw Plato as a kind of radical Benthamite, a questioner of all established values. In this tug-of-war the figure of Socrates perhaps suffered most: his irony forgotten, he was presented successively as a liberal idealist, a radical gadfly, a substitute Christ-figure and mystic, or a no-nonsense early Victorian Methodist.

To Christian scholars of all denominations, the fact that it was Grote, of all people, who wrote the standard nineteenth-century work on Plato (its conclusions still a starting-point for much argument today) came as a supremely unpalatable irony: Blackie, for instance, held it to be "no less inappropriate than Voltaire's composing a commentary on the fourth Gospel". Jowett created a Hegelian Plato; his disciples employed this odd figure "to encourage a collective civic life in which the individualism of the mid-Victorian period would come under the benevolent direction of the state and of a civic elite that resembled Mill's vision of bureaucracy". Through Oxford and the Civil Service examinations the Empire struck back: it is

not hard to see how Rhodes or Kipling would look at the Republic. But, on the other hand, could treat the doctrine of Plato as a vindication of the senses. Nettleship related the Republic to medieval (hence, anti-commercial) monastic ideal; Ernest Barker put the same dialogue to work as a handbook inculcating service to the state. After beginning the century in neglect, Plato ended it with a "revival that far outshone that of the Renaissance". Though Grote had been worried by the philosopher's political illiberalism, it was left for our own age to tar and feather Plato as an out-and-out totalitarian. The symbolic exploitation of past and present continues.

Equally startling, though in political rather than religious terms, is the metamorphosis of the Athenian constitution, as seen by English historians, from a late eighteenth-century bourgeois embodying all the worst features of lawless anarchy, political chaos, and disregard for personal security, to an Edwardian model of idealized social and political aspirations for classically-educated servants of Empire to imitate. Turner's chapter on this remarkable transformation is at once an object-lesson in disinterested research and a historiographical horror-story. No man can be wholly impartial, and we catch a glimpse of where Turner stands from his uncharacteristic encomium of Zimmern's *Greek Commonwealth*, which he describes as "one of the most sensitive, eloquent, evocative and humane works ever written about Athens in this language". Such judgments, pro or con, are rare in this book, and all the more effective as a result. Andrew Lang is savagely dismissed: "At his best he was only a gifted amateur and at his worst a polemical bore." Frazer gets short shrift for transforming Demeter and Persephone "into wheat-stalk dolls". On the nineteenth-century historians Turner's objectivity is with-

ing, his wit caustic. Skillfully he relates their treatment of evidence to their own political and moral predilections, noting Arnold's obsession with "the ideal unity of the Greek polis as the means of overcoming modern democratic pluralism". Grote's disconcerting habit of equating the Athenian Assembly with Parliament, Pericles with the Prime Minister, Cleon with some Opposition spokesman. We can see why Sparta was so highly regarded at the opening of the century but condemned at its close, why Mitford rehabilitated the tyrant, why Grote trod so gingerly in his treatment of Solon and Peisistratus ("his scenario too closely resembled the confiscation of property during the French Revolution and Napoleon's later tyranny to suit Grote's polemical purposes"). How Gladstone's Peelite view of Homeric politics brought him into conflict with the utilitarians, how and why the hot potato of slavery was handled more boldly from 1867 onwards (not only the end of the American Civil War but also the passing of the Second Reform Act), how views of Macedonia in the fourth century bc were conditioned by Anglo-German relations before 1914. Finally, we are left with an unforgettable image of London buses, a year later, carrying extracts from Pericles' Funeral Oration on official war-propaganda posters. "The debate over the Athenian constitution", Turner concludes, "was primarily a debate over the conservative image of democracy and not over democracy itself." It would be hard, in the face of the evidence he musters, to argue with that verdict.

The same mastery of material and independence of judgment inform every topic on which he turns that shrewdly penetrating eye of his. Max Müller's Aryanism, for instance, like his theories of solar myth, offers a tempting target to the modern cynic (of Heracles' death Müller wrote: "Another magnificent sunset . . .") but Turner puts his finger unerringly

on the quality that endeared this pompous, Etonian eccentric to Victorian England, the notion that the original nobility of the Aryan race would save mankind from Darwinism, that the embarrassing habits of "theft, murder, lying, incest, adultery, homosexuality, promiscuity, sodomy and castration" attributed to the Greek gods or heroes by our sources were all decadent late accretions, that, as Müller assured his readers, "in all these tales there is nothing of which, in its old shape, we ought to be ashamed." No wonder he was offered a knighthood and made a Privy Councillor! Turner also gets to the heart of Gladstone's odd obsessions about Homer, sees precisely why Jebb and Arnold were far from impartial. In Schleiermann's archaeological discoveries (Tyrins in particular so offended Jebb's preconceived notions of high Homeric culture that he argued strongly for the ruins being Byzantine), and pinpoints the advantages enjoyed by Aristotle's *Ethics* as an instrument of education: it was sensible, it upheld social elitism (thus appealing equally to Anglicanism and the aristocracy), it did not evoke mystical or radical yearnings in the young, much less challenge traditional beliefs regarding the sanctity of property or the family, and (as Mark Pattison in an unpublished manuscript admitted) it was an ideal text from which to set examination questions.

Again and again we find Turner's sharply critical insights operating on a basis of exhaustive research: the combination is formidable. *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* seems to me one of the most important and far-reaching investigations of the roots of intellectual history to be published in decades, a book to be read and reread (as much for its incidental felicities and endlessly quotable aphorisms as for its central arguments), to be annotated, argued with, and debated on specific issues for years to come. It is a truly monumental achievement.

## Manning the North-West Frontier

By S. S. Frere

MALCOLM TODD:  
Roman Britain 55 BC-AD 400  
285pp. Fontana. Paperback, £2.95.  
0 00 633756 2

ANTHONY R. BIRLEY:  
The Fasti of Roman Britain  
476pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford  
University Press, £30.  
0 19 814821 6

The history of these islands during the first four centuries AD has not merely to be sought in the works of ancient authors; much of it has to be patched together from the evidence of innumerable archaeological digs, often fragmentary inscriptions, coinage studies, examination of air-photographs and many other sources. Much good judgment and sound sense is needed in selection as well as an encyclopedic grasp of what is available. The historian of Roman Britain, however, also needs to keep abreast of what is written about other regions of, or near, the Roman Empire, not only for the new interpretations which they may suggest of his own material, but also for the light which they may throw on his chief characters, the governors and procurators, legionary commanders and so on, for whom their posting in Britain was only one incident in a long career and for whom career-inscriptions were set up in their home towns or in other provinces. The source-material is thus both complex and constantly expanding; altered histories require frequent revision.

Malcolm Todd has written a very readable short history with, as he says, the needs of students in mind, and he contributes a number of valuable new ideas and perspectives. The plan is a straight historical narrative interrupted by only short excursions here and there, specifically on social, economic, religious or archaeological

aspects of the subject; where he pronounces personal judgments one sometimes may regret that lack of space precludes longer discussion, reasonable and salutary though most of these interventions are.

One of the drawbacks of the method is a certain imbalance between the treatment of periods well represented in the ancient sources and those not well attested; 180 pages are devoted to the years of mainly military history from Caesar to the early third century, and only sixty-five to the last, most flourishing, period of Roman Britain when more depends on archaeology. But the early chapters do contain short discussions of great insight, e.g. on the society and economy of pre-Roman Britain. Professor Todd has picked his way carefully through the complexities of modern archaeological evidence, though without quoting much of it, and very few actual errors of fact, or failures in proof-reading, can be detected. The former include some inconsistencies on the map of civitates (fig 26); the Flavian date ascribed to the forts of Llwy-y-Brair and Inveresk (pp 102, 106); the use of S. as abbreviation for Sextus (*passim*); the altar on fig 22 from Colchester in Holland which mentions a *Legatus* (not a *Legatus* to have traced at Calisthor-by-Norwich, but which is no longer relevant to Britain); and a curious miscalculation of legionary strength on p 162. The only serious example of the latter is on p 196, where the date has been split out to give the surprising statement that about three hundred earth-works were thrown around the villa at Ely, Cam. This suggests the use of a dictaphone in composition.

The historical interpretation of archaeological results sometimes swings violently from old to new dogmas. In recent years there has been a strong reaction against the idea of large-scale prehistoric immigration ("invasion") into Britain, and this has been consistently applied. But this view has become uncritical article of faith. It is surprising that Todd did not perceive the inconsistencies in applying it to

the Belgic settlement of south-east Britain. Whatever may be the explanation of the arrival of Gallo-Belgic coinage of the first century bc, how else than by invasion and subsequent settlement can Divitacus' rule in Britain be explained; how else the complete and sudden change to La Tène III material culture? These facts which cannot be explained away merely by "the processes of trade and exchange". He takes a more critical view, though in the end with approval, of recent reinterpretations of the events of 196, involving himself in an inconsistency over the possible removal of troops from the Wall by Albinus then and by Allectus a century later. There is still no certainty about the fate of the frontier in 196.

Among new archaeological evidence taken into account is the Christian silver treasure found in 1975 at Water Newton (*Durobrivae*), where Todd emphasizes the evidence it provides of contacts with the wider Christian world and especially with the Church in the eastern provinces. Although he does not mention it, a suggestive parallel could be drawn with the eastern connections identified in the arrangements of the church at St. Albans (*Archaeologia* cv, 1976); the two strands of evidence may be a pointer to the origins of Christianity in Britain.

One of the results of several recent studies has been to stress the closely classical and literary character of the culture of the higher classes in late Roman Britain, a conclusion at first sight gratifying and flattering, and normally so taken in a very suggestive paragraph Todd distinguishes it as a characteristic of fundamental weakness, symptomatic of lack of intellectual power and political vigour. Indeed his chapters on the last stages of Roman Britain are probably the best in the book. There has been much new progress in our understanding of the fifth century, and he leads us through it all with zest.

Thus for a concise account of events and developments during the

four centuries of Roman Britain this book will be found both useful and stimulating; we need a second volume, however, to give a fuller picture of the contribution of recent archaeological discoveries, especially in the civilian field.

A. R. Birley's *Fasti* has long been in preparation, having been begun by Eric Birley about forty years ago; its appearance now will surely have somewhat the same effect on the release of knowledge as did the publication of *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* a decade and a half ago. In over the information could be obtained elsewhere, but only at the cost of hard work which few were likely to contemplate systematically — knowing that the task was already in hand. *The Fasti* contains the careers (as far as they are known) of all men of Senatorial rank known to have held office in Britain — that is to say governors, *legati*, legionary legates and Senatorial tribunes — together with those of officials of high equestrian rank — procurators and fleet commanders. It excludes Imperial freedmen and army officers of equestrian status such as *praefecti castrorum* or *legiones*, auxiliary commanders and below, whose careers are in the main now available in other works. In compensation a sensible break has been made with the tradition of such archives by taking us past the Diocletian reforms so as to include the officials of the last century of Roman rule.

In the sense that "history is about change" it gives us a most valuable collection of source-material which only a dedicated epigrapher could have assembled; but the book is far more than this, for Birley has provided a number of interpretative discussions on such subjects as the Senatorial career, the origins and careers of governors of Britain, together with those of other officials, as well as on various relevant historical problems; these include the military command in the fourth century and the dates of the successive divisions of Britain, first into two provinces, then into four, and later

into five. All these are of the greatest interest, being marked by very elegant critical scholarship of a mature, conservative kind as they for the most part carry conviction.

What is known of the careers of the various governors is of course especially revealing in terms of policies, since the evidence shows that governors of Britain were on the whole carefully selected for the tasks in view; Birley shows clearly how the system worked. The independence of his judgment is most apparent in his arguments for starting Agricola's governorship in 77 rather than 78 — arguments which will require careful examination even if at first sight they may not appear wholly convincing — and in his treatment of two other governors, the possibility of whose very existence recent writers have attempted to undermine. It is gratifying — indeed even amusing — to find that after all I. A. Richmond's proposal of Triarius Rufinus as the governor fragmentarily attested on the Reculver stone is not the wild error that it has been said to be, and that Ulpian Marcellus the younger is again restored to potential respectability. All in all, the "literary" side of the Romano-British history has been immensely enriched by a book which will long remain a quarry for writers on the province and for those studying the workings of imperial government.

The fourth edition of H. H. Scullard's *A History of the Roman World 753 to 146 BC* (522pp. Methuen, £12. 0 416 71480 3) takes account of the archaeological discoveries made since the publication of the third edition in 1961. The first two chapters on the foundation of Rome, "The Land and its Peoples" and "Regal Rome", have been largely rewritten and the text has been updated throughout. A discussion of the sources now forms a new chapter and the notes and bibliography have been revised and expanded. The book contains maps of the Roman world including plans of Carthage, Nova and Carthage.

## The assimilation of Britain

By A. R. Birley

PETER SALWAY:  
Roman Britain  
824pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford  
University Press, £19.50.  
0 19 821717 X

*Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, by R. G. Collingwood and J. N. L. Myres, the original Volume 1 of the *Oxford History of England*, appeared in 1936, and the revised edition of 1937 long remained a standard work. Collingwood's portion, *Roman Britain* (which the work under review replaces as Volume 1), occupied 324 pages, plus sixteen in the Bibliography and, allowing in about two-thirds of the Index, say about 360 pages in all out of 515. Peter Salway cannot help the price inflation: Volume 1 cost £25.6d in 1937 (but readers seeking consolation in his Chapter 10 will find him curiously silent on the gigantic monetary inflation of the third century). And increase in length was inevitable; as he notes in the preface, "Collingwood wrote in very different circumstances". Indeed, Collingwood actually wrote that "Modern books wholly dealing with Roman Britain are not very numerous", which is certainly no longer so. In some ways this has made things easier: for example, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, Volume 1, published in 1965 under the names of Collingwood himself (twenty-two years after his death) and of his co-editor and successor in that project, R. P. Wright, is an indispensable aid. But a vast mass of new material, mainly archaeological, has appeared, leading, in 1970, to the living off of Romano-British matters from the *Journal of Roman Studies*. Meanwhile S. S. Frere's substantial monograph, *Britannia*, had already, from its first publication in 1967, become the standard replacement for Collingwood — at the very moment when Salway was commissioned to write an entirely new work rather than, as initially intended, to bring the original up to date. There are now eleven solid volumes of the new *Journal*, also called *Britannia*, and scores of other works "wholly dealing with Roman Britain" or aspects of it.

Mr Salway has had to digest it all, at least up to 1977, when he more or less closed the ledger, while endeavouring, sometimes by the device of lengthy notes at the end of chapters, to take account of subsequent work. In most respects he is thoroughly abreast of recent theories and discoveries. Thus current doubts about which Britons were "Belgic" and when Britain was Celticized are handled with a sure touch in Chapter 1; the possibility that Honorius' famous letter of 410 may not have been to the cities of Britain at all (but to those of *Bretia*, i.e. Brittium or Calabria), tersely favoured by A. L. F. Rivet in the monumental *Place-Names of Roman Britain* (with Coll. Smith, 1979), is cautiously ventilated in Chapter 15; and the demolition of Cunedda as a historical figure by D. M. Dunville is accepted. It is said that Salway was unable to re-cast his Appendix IV on Codoginus in the light of J. E. Bogners' convincing demonstration that that ruler was called, on the Cliechester inscription, not "King (and) Legate of the Emperor in Britain" but "Great King of Britain". The former was anomalous, the new version preposterous but paralleled in the east for petty rulers of more than one people, *quaedam civitates*. Charles Thomas's *Christianity in Roman Britain* (1981) is one of several recent works which would doubtless have caused Salway to write differently (and not merely on Christianity) had he been able to consult it.

Collingwood had four sections (or Books). Salway, relieved of the need to accommodate an Anglo-Saxon colleague, is able to have five, and, more recently, work with the Open University, through which he has helped to make this subject more widely accessible. But he seems to regard himself as something of a lone wolf, and in some cases his detachment has put him slightly out of touch. The division of Dacia is still attributed to Antoninus Pius, although since 1961 Hadrian is known to have been responsible. Boninus, a shadowy third-century usurper, is still included for his "British father", although the bogus parent's alleged profession (schoolmaster) is omitted; this fantasy of the *Historia Augusta* did not deserve a revived existence after the labours of Sir Ronald Syme and others. Salway devotes more space to the background of another usurper, the more important fourth-century rival of Constantius II, Magnentius. Why not discuss Zenobia? statement that he had a British father, for which there is some not obviously contaminated support, which adds a Frankish mother and a birthplace at Amiens? This would have helped to explain why his overthrow led to such a bloody purge in Britain.

Recourse to, and citation of, the various indispensable aids such as the *Real-encyclopädie*, the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, H. G. Pflaum's *Carreres Procuratoriennes*, and the *Prosopographia of the Later Roman Empire* by Jones, Martin, Dale, and Morris, would have been economical, easy, salutary, and helpful to the reader. As it is, some may be baffled, for example, to find as preference for a figure four to six times higher and comments on the implications.

On many subjects discussed with confidence by Collingwood, there are quite new perspectives well put across here: on continuity not least, from British to Roman, from Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon, there is now some evidence; on villas and villages; on relations between town and country. Art, given a memorable separate chapter by Collingwood, an artist's son, is, in view of the emphasis on history rather than archaeology, excluded from special treatment; a wise decision, no doubt, in any case, when the classic exposition by J. M. C. Toynbee is available. Salway laments in his Bibliography the lack of an up-to-date monograph on the army in Britain. He might usefully have gathered together and supplemented his various sections in a separate chapter. But P. A. Holder's *The Roman Army in Britain*, to appear shortly, will supply this gap.

Collingwood was the undisputed leader of Romano-British studies in the inter-war years, even being known (affectionately) as *Dice* to some of his disciples. In the *Oxford History*, "his feet are on the mantlepiece, he enjoys himself, and his reader with him", as Mortimer Wheeler put it; but, he added, the method was dangerous for "the innocent student". Much of the book indeed is close to historical fiction, "great fun, but liable to shock the pedant". Times have changed, the field is more crowded, and Salway is well aware of the intense debates, sometimes rivalries, within it. He also refers defensively to "a curious prejudice against Romano-British studies" by those outside, as if these studies "were in some way not quite intellectually respectable." Perhaps Collingwood had something to do with this. His "predecessor" Haverfield was Camden Professor of Ancient History; Collingwood was an academic in a quite different field, who was to become Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy. In a sense, he was an amateur archaeologist with a special interest in Roman Britain. Thereby perhaps the subject was divorced, or at least separated, from the mainstream of ancient history and archaeology, at Oxford if not elsewhere. We are told on the dust-jacket that Salway "takes a relatively detached view of current scholarly controversy", and he himself stresses that "there is no agreement on many major issues and . . . no possibility that all aspects of the subject can ever again be comprehended by one historian".

He certainly has the right background to make the attempt: classics at Cambridge in the days of A.H.M. Jones; research in Germany and at Newcastle and a first book on a metal thesis; the editing of Sir Ian Richmond's papers (published in 1969); participation in the Fenland project (published in 1970), on all of which he naturally draws heavily, and, more recently, work with the Open University, through which he has helped to make this subject more widely accessible. But he seems to regard himself as something of a lone wolf, and in some cases his detachment has put him slightly out of touch.

The theory has had great influence on subsequent work, though it would not be easy today to find anthropologists to support its theoretical basis. Scullard is still in general persuaded of its validity; he examines criticisms of the position, but decides that a "primitivist" position is a reasonable choice and goes on to say: "Some primitive ideas obviously survive into later times, but on the

reading "See note to *CIL* VII, 379", where Hubner, in 1873, quoted Agrippa's career inscription found in Italy, from Orelli — republished in *CIL* XI, by Dessau in *ILS*, discussed at length by Pflaum as his no 120; *CIL* VII 379 is of course reproduced as *RIB* 823 by Collingwood and Wright, with some bibliography. Or again, Mr Salway boldly writes of Maximian making his praetorian prefect Constantius a Caesar, with no hint that Constantius' prefecture was only a conjecture of Otto Seeck, long ago abandoned; instead he hunkers into a discussion of the significance of the office.

Some digressions of this kind could have been pruned, valuable though it is that in a book that will be read by many non-specialists in classical antiquity explanations of Roman politics and society abound. Salway includes a good many lengthy verbal citations from a host of modern writers, chief among them A. H. M. Jones. This has its merits, but it makes a long book even longer. So too does his scholarly dubitation: "the vexed question . . . one of those controversies . . . I personally still favour the view . . . I agree with others . . . not in the least likely . . . we may guess . . . without the precision of exact epigraphic or literary evidence . . . particularly liable to rapid renaissance . . . But caution must remain", all from one paragraph (on the *littus Saxonum*) — could he not have been bolder or at

least more concise? As early as p 202 he pleads lack of space "to list and discuss all the evidence, which for a period so hotly discussed [the later second century] among scholars ought really to be presented". Instead he relies, in that case, on the admirable *Hadrian's Wall* (1976) by D. J. Brezée and B. Dobson. But it would have been handy and instructive to have the evidence presented.

Is it this sort of thing — of which Wheeler complained when reviewing Collingwood — that feeds the "curious prejudice" referred to earlier, prejudice among "mainstream" ancient historians, perhaps, notoriously — excessively, as Keith Hopkins has urged — prone to elevate the ancient sources "to the level of sacred texts"? It would be unfair to reproach Salway further on this score. He has been constrained, as far as his scholarly apparatus and annotations are concerned, by the limits of the *Oxford History* style. His hedging may at times be overdone, but the field has become rather a jungle, and "the innocent student", who, Wheeler feared, "may not know with what voice his author speaks" when reading Collingwood, will emerge after reading Salway, exhausted and battered, but no longer innocent.

Mr Salway may rest on his laurels, unless, as with *RIB*, the Press invite him to make an almost instant revision.

## Marking the days

By J. A. North

H. H. SCULLARD:  
Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic  
288pp. Thames and Hudson, £12.  
0 500 40041 5

The religious festivals of the ancient Romans may seem a rather narrow subject for a book in a series which is aimed at the general reader as well as the student. They have a special importance for the real devotee of Roman Religion or for those who try to compare it with other religious systems; but, apart from seekers after enlightenment about the role of the Lupercalia in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, neither the general reader nor the student who wants an introductory book on Roman paganism will find what they need in these pages. In fact, however, it is one of the strengths of the "Aspects of Greek and Roman Life" series of which the author has been the general editor from the beginning, that it can find room for the particular as well as for the broad survey; what H. H. Scullard has given us is an excellent reference-book on the day-to-day events of the Roman calendar. It shares the merits of his other works, familiar to every student of Roman history from his very first introduction to the subject onwards: his books offer lucid analysis of the basic facts, combined with notes and references which convey a sense of the problems and progress of research, and of the excitement and opportunities of new discoveries.

*Roman Festivals and Ceremonies* has a famous predecessor in W. Warde Fowler's *Roman Festivals*, first published in 1899; this provides Scullard with his avowed model for the format, and his main purpose is to update it in the light of the fuller and more sophisticated editions of the inscriptions on which the subject is based, of new archaeological discoveries, and of a great weight of research on admittedly inadequate evidence. He departs from the model in adding accounts of other ceremonies (the triumph, public funerals and the ritual of public meetings), and in concentrating his attention on the period of Cicero and Caesar rather than on the remote past of King Numa and King Tarquin. This is a sensible decision because it is only in the later republic that there

is any hope of understanding how the system worked and how it related to the needs of Roman society: the only trouble is that many of the festivals, though still celebrated in due form, were already thoroughly obscure to the Romans of Cicero's day, so that any commentator is necessarily drawn into speculation about their original meaning. It is never easy in religious history to separate the past from the present; least of all in Rome, where the significance of ritual was often conceived in terms of specific past events.

For Warde Fowler, on the other hand, interest in the remote past was central to the purpose of his book. He was writing very much in the light of the "discoveries" of contemporary anthropology, especially of the work of Tylor, Frazer and Robertson Smith, which seemed to offer him a secure evolutionary model, into which he thought he could fit Roman religious experience; he also had a new and crucial clue in Mommsen's observation that the sun-viewing copies of the calendar of the first century AD contained (written in capital letters) the nucleus of a much earlier calendar, perhaps dating from the sixth century BC. As he saw it, the Romans of the period of their early calendar were just emerging from the animistic, pre-deistic phase and were only in the process of evolving the conception of specific gods and goddesses; this development was never fully completed because of the conservatism and stultism of the powerful priestly authorities. So, the Romans provided a unique example of the evolutionary scheme in action, but frozen at a particular point of its development, half-way between animism and the worship of deities. The annual festivals played an important part in this theory, because in many of them the role played by the gods is obscure or debatable; in some cases the later Romans themselves argued about which was the god of a particular festival.

The theory has had great influence on subsequent work, though it would not be easy today to find anthropologists to support its theoretical basis. Scullard is still in general persuaded of its validity; he examines criticisms of the position, but decides that a "primitivist" position is a reasonable choice and goes on to say: "Some primitive ideas obviously survive into later times, but on the

whole the Romans freed themselves from the cruder manifestations of animism and taboos, to some extent deliberately." It is very doubtful whether this is anything more than the imposition of a preconceived notion, based on the assumption that what the author thinks "primitive" must be early and what he thinks "rational" must be later. As a matter of fact, magic in particular seems, as far as our evidence goes, to have become more prominent and important in later Rome than it had been in early times. While "primitive" elements are in question, the custom of the public burial alive of human victims, in the attempt to avert disasters, seems to have been a new invention in the middle republic. The fact seems to be that Roman paganism contained at all periods a mixture of elements co-existing, which under the evolutionary scheme ought to belong to quite different periods. We have therefore no warrant for saying that where we find a particular practice "magical" it must necessarily be early.

It is a pity too that Scullard's commitment to this view has led him to underrate the work of the French Indo-Europeanist Georges Dumézil. Scullard may well be right, and he is certainly not alone in rejecting Dumézil's theories about the social and mythical structures common to all Indo-European societies; but the value of his discussions of individual ceremonies and festivals does not depend on accepting the total "ideology" of the Indo-Europeans" and in this area there ought to be more reference to this innovative work, at least to enable the reader to judge for himself.

These criticisms, important in principle, hardly detract from the practical value of the book, which admirably fulfils its purpose of offering a detailed description of what went on in the main ceremonies and rituals of the Roman year. But perhaps a simpler reference-book would have resulted if Scullard had concentrated on the rituals which are prominent in the late republic and not followed the whole calendar day by day. There would have been a considerable loss to the specialist; but he could have avoided the rather weak three-fold structure (Introduction; cycle of festivals; other ceremonies). According to the neglected Dumézil, a triadic structure is buried deep in the Indo-European soul; in this case it might have been better to resist the temptation.



# The Geist in the Greek Zeiten

By Paul Cartledge

PAVEL OLIVA:  
The Birth of Greek Civilization  
Translated by Iris Urvan Levitov  
20pp, 32 plates. Orlis 17 95  
0 85613 321 3

Orbis Publishing have done well in bringing out this modified English version of a work originally published in Czech in 1976. But the book's claim that the period treated is "generally unexplored" will hardly wash, counting only books published in English, we find that no less than seven have appeared on some or all aspects of the history of pre-classical Greece in the past five years alone. Nor have all these books been aimed solely at a coterie of academic specialists. So the publication of *The Birth of Greek Civilization* prompts two questions: why this current fascination with early historical Greece? and does this latest manifestation of it either add something significantly new in method and conclusions, or ease the burden of possibly bemused pupils and teachers?

The first of these is by far the harder to answer satisfactorily. For not everyone will entirely accept the provocative thesis of Anthony Snodgrass's *Archaeology and the Greek Past* (1971) that the period from about 800 to 500 BC is the most important in all ancient Greek history. There is, no doubt, a great fascination in charting the rise of the Greek polis ("city-state") is a misleading translation) and the invention of politics; in tracing the steps of Greek traders and emigrants who distributed Hellenic ideas and artifacts all round the Mediterranean basin and beyond; and in disentangling the multinational strands of

Archaic Greek visual art, literature, and speculative inquiry. Yet the period remains, historiographically speaking, very poorly documented indeed, and I suspect that its current attraction owes much to the *omni-linguam pro magnitudine* syndrome and something to boredom with the story that was Classical Greece.

On the other hand, single-minded concentration on pre-classical Greece can have a major drawback, as Snodgrass above all has illustrated. All prehistory of human history is a matter primarily of convention and convenience. But some periods seem more than just hazy to the trained eye, and some more than just "unexplored". The book's claim that the period treated is "generally unexplored" will hardly wash, counting only books published in English, we find that no less than seven have appeared on some or all aspects of the history of pre-classical Greece in the past five years alone. Nor have all these books been aimed solely at a coterie of academic specialists. So the publication of *The Birth of Greek Civilization* prompts two questions: why this current fascination with early historical Greece? and does this latest manifestation of it either add something significantly new in method and conclusions, or ease the burden of possibly bemused pupils and teachers?

Pavel Oliva was not in a position to take the measure of Snodgrass's contribution. Nor could he profit from Oswyn Murray's *Early Greece* or the latest editions of John Boardman's *The Greeks: Their World* and Moses Finley's *Early Greece*. It is therefore a tribute to his scholarly hard work to say that it was not entirely superseded before it was published. This is due mainly to its comprehensive scope, but also to its scholarly sobriety and clarity of exposition. It cannot in all fairness be said to be shot through with penetrating originality, but for harassed teachers and students who require a reliable guide to the main problems that may be a positive recommendation.

Dr Oliva, who is attached to the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and lectures at Charles University in Prague, is among the leading ancient historians in his country, with an impressive list of publications stretching back over twenty-five years. He is at much at home in the panorama of the Roman Empire as he is in Hellenistic Greece. To an English-speaking reader he will perhaps be best known for his formidable learned social history of Sparta, which appeared in translation a decade ago. But his qualifications for writing the present synthesis also include a 500-page study of early Greek tyranny and a series of articles on the reformist Athenian law-giver Solon.

The book opens with a chapter on prehistoric Greece from the Neolithic to the zenith of Bronze Age civilization. A rather crude distinction will not commend itself to the currently fashionable "independent invention" school of prehistorians, and the function of the Minoan and Mycenaean palaces as redistributive centres is not fully brought out. But a fair measure of support can be expected for the traditional view that Mycenaean civilization succumbed to "barbarian" attacks from without; and it is particularly interesting to find a Czech scholar having no truck with any class-struggle theory of Mycenaean collapse.

The ensuing "Dark Age" is competently handled, though the fact that this is also the Early Iron Age in at least the more advanced parts of the Greek world is rather masked beneath the flat statement that "metal-working also made great progress". But this flaw is compensated for by a lively discussion of the origins of the Greek alphabet. This is held to be derived, not from the

Phoenician non-vocalic sign system, but from the Anatolian alphabet of North Syria which had sometimes employed signs for vowels. I would have welcomed some explicit description of the "newly found evidence" on which this attractive view is based. Also, any future treatment of the eleventh to ninth centuries BC will have to take account of recent British finds at Lefkandi on Euboea which remind us saturnally that darkness is in the eye of the beholder.

The meat of the book is contained in the remaining four chapters. In his discussion of Archaic Sparta, Oliva is back on home ground, and undergraduate readers in particular will appreciate the clear summaries given here of issues handled at great length and with dauntingly full bibliographical apparatus in his earlier book. The emphasis is again on social history, and the Helots are properly introduced at the outset of the discussion. But I missed a reference to institutionalized pederasty in Sparta (Spartans below the age of thirty did not send their "friends" to market, as Oliva misleadingly reports the relevant passage of Plutarch, but rather their kinsmen and male lovers); and the same omission occurs in the account of Dorian Crete, which is rightly treated in the same chapter as Sparta.

The fourth chapter is in some ways the best, not least for its stress on the mutual causal relationship between the process of polis-formation and the movement of overseas settlement (but probably inextricably known as "colonization"). This causal link is best seen in the process of urbanization. Here the colonial foundations showed the way to their mother-cities, as Claude Bérard has recently demonstrated most vividly in the case of Euboean Eretria. Oliva's positions on the vexed

questions of the relation between trade and colonization and the overall character of economic relations in Archaic Greece are balanced and cautious, though his dates for the first coinages of Corinth, Miletus and Ephesus are unacceptably high.

In his chapter on the political and social history of Athens Oliva addresses himself to the only Archaic Greek state for whose internal evolution there is reasonably full evidence. Controversy abounds, and not all will agree that Oliva has adopted the most likely interpretation of such slippery matters as the alienability of land and the status of the *hektemoroi*. More culpably, perhaps, he does not specify the potentially revolutionary significance of Solon's granting the *proteroi* Athenians access to his new Assembly and Court of Appeal (perhaps it was now that votes were first counted at Athens, and the principle of one man-one vote introduced); nor does he link the abolition of debt bondage by Solon to the growth of chattel slavery in Attika during the sixth century.

Oliva does, however, integrate the history of Athenian art with the history of Athens's political, social and economic development. This integrated approach informs his final chapter, where the rise of personal lyric poetry is connected to the evolution of the polis and the colonization movement, and freedom within the framework of the polis is rightly seen as crucial for the advance in theoretical speculation made by Greek thinkers over their oriental predecessors. In this intellectual context at least, we may agree that the Persian Wars are "rightly regarded as the turning point between the archaic and the classical periods of Greek history".

## Information, please

Sir Robert Filmer (1588-1653) of East Sutton Park, Kent; whereabouts of any letters, diaries, etc. of Sir Robert or his wife, Anne Helton.

Margaret J. M. Ezell, Girton College, Cambridge CB3 0UC.

Middle East and Italy (1940-45): poetry, prose, sketches and diary extracts produced in these theatres during the Second World War sought for publication in forthcoming collection, *From Oasis into Italy*; to be produced in collaboration with the Imperial War Museum, which with the assent of the authors, will retain MSS for its archives. Contributions should be submitted to the editors at the address below.

Victor Selwyn, The Salamander Oasis Trust, 1 Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, London EC4 3EP.

Oral history: we have been asked by Methuen to write a book on the practice of interviewing people eminent in their respective fields ("elite" oral history), and would be grateful to hear from anybody with experience, either of interviewing such figures as part of their research or of establishing an archive of this type of material.

Anthony Seaton, Joanna Papworth, 1 Florence Villas, Holmesdale Road, London N6.

Leutenant George Pilpous RN (1814-45), son of Henry Pilpous, Bishop of Exeter from 1830 to 1869; any letters, journals, or information, especially of his early life; for a biography.

P. M. Pettit, 319 East Coast Road, Mairangi Bay, Auckland 10, New Zealand.

Charlotte Angus Scott (1858-1931): first woman Wrangler of the Cambridge Tripos exams in 1880, vice-president of the American Mathematical Society in 1905, head of

the Bryn Mawr Mathematical Department in Pennsylvania, 1885-1925. Addresses sought of her nephews, William Somerville Scott or Angus Esley Scott, or of others who might have her personal correspondence; for editing and a biography.

Patricia C. Kenschall, 56 Gordonhurst Avenue, Upper Montclair, New Jersey 07043, USA.

David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General and Commissioner of Assam, 1823-31, and nephew of David Scott the elder, Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company; whereabouts of his personal correspondence or private papers; for a study of the early days of British rule in Assam.

J. P. L. Gwynn, 65 South Hill Road, Bromley, Kent BR2 0RW.

Margaret Amie Sewell: any information, personal or professional; for purposes of research into the origins of social-work training in Britain.

Barbara Symons, School of Social Work, University College, Cardiff, 37 Corbett Road, Cardiff, South Glamorgan.

Una Marson (1905-65): Jamaican poet and playwright, first editor of *Caribbean Voices*, feminist, social worker and secretary of Haile Selassie. I would appreciate hearing from anyone who may have known her; for a research study.

Erika Smilowitz, 15 Oakley Road, London N1.

A. R. Radcliffe-Brown pioneer social anthropologist; personal and professional reminiscences sought for a biography.

P. A. Danaher, St Mary's College, James Cook University, Douglas 4811, Queensland, Australia.

## The members for defence

By P. J. Rhodes

JACK CARGILL:  
The Second Athenian League  
Empire or Free Alliance?  
215pp, University of California Press, 1977, £25.  
0 520 04090 4

MILTIADES B. HATZOPOULOS and LOUISA D. LOUKOPOULOS (Editors):  
Philip of Macedon  
254pp, Heinemann Educational, £21.  
0 435 36340 0

The first half of the fourth century BC has become a favourite quarry-ground for young American scholars, and Cargill has devoted his attention to the Second Athenian League, on which there has been no book in English since the one with which F. H. Marshall won the Thirlwall Prize in 1905.

The history of the Second League has not been transformed by new evidence to anything like the same extent as the history of the Delian League; there are no fourth-century Tribute Lists. The texts of some inscriptions have been improved by S. Accame, and a little material is available now that was not available to Marshall, but the gains are not great. Jack Cargill has re-examined the most important of the inscriptions, the prospectus of the League (and publishes as his frontispiece an unhelpfully small facsimile); he finds that in the large enunciations Accame's reconstruction owed more to imagination than to the marks on the stone; he confirms that the restoration of Coreya in the list of members is impossible and that the restoration of Juson (in the small enunciation) is unwarranted; otherwise he suggests only one small modification at the text in the Corpus.

As the sub-title indicates, the book is not a general history of the League (though an outline is given at the end) but an essay in interpretation. For Marshall there were sinister signs even in the first decade of the

League; and when it was no longer necessary to fight against Sparta Athens tried to convert the League into an empire, as she had converted the Delian League into an empire when it was no longer necessary to fight against Persia. Cargill believes that Athens had genuinely learned from her earlier mistakes, gave sufficient guarantees to the members of the new League, and never tried to convert it into an empire; members who defected from the League did so not because of Athenian oppression but because of their own ambitions or external pressure.

Names were added to the list of members on various occasions in the first few years of the League's existence, but never thereafter; with one exception, the sending of garrisons and Athenian officers to command them, promises which were made in the prospectus are not known to have been broken to members who appear in the list. Garrisons sometimes proved to be in the interests of the members, and it was apparently decided that they could be sent with the approval of the council of allies; provisions for the transfer of lawsuits from Athens to Athens are "mere details" in the context of a generally mild settlement after revolt.

It may be true that no state joined the League, in the sense of becoming entitled to a vote in the council of allies, after the ending of additions to the published list of members, though Cargill overlooks the clear evidence that the Thracian prince Cersobleptes tried to join the League in 346; but this is to sweep the problem under the carpet rather than solve it. Cargill has to admit that the promises made in the prospectus were not kept to all who became allies of Athens, that membership of the League became a privileged form of alliance. Yet the prospectus had offered membership to all Greeks and barbarians not subject to the Persian King; it promises did not apply to those who later became allies of Athens, Athens's attitude had changed, whether the later allies were enrolled in the League or not.

A League formed to resist Sparta ceased to be necessary after Thebes

had defeated Sparta at Leuctra; and it is odd that a passage which Cargill is still willing to accept as a reference to the King's Peace was deleted from the prospectus (four years after Leuctra, he believes), yet the passage which identified Sparta as the League's enemy was allowed to stand. Fighting on behalf of Sparta in the Peloponnese could hardly appeal to the members of the League; and Athens's attempt to recover old possessions in the north Aegean, and her foundation of cleruchies, did represent a change of attitude from that proclaimed at the creation of the League, and were bound to alarm the members even while the promises made to them remained unbroken.

The status of Coreya remains problematic. Cargill correctly rejects her restoration in the inscribed list of members, and argues that the inscribed decree ordering the enrolling of Coreya and others in the League was followed by a change of mind in Coreya. Another inscription, undated, gives the terms of an alliance between Athens and Coreya in which Coreya undertakes not to make peace without Athens and the mass of the allies, and otherwise to act according to the resolutions of the allies. For Cargill Coreya is the first instance of a state which did not join the League but became an ally of Athens and the League; but the last clause seems to imply membership, and it may yet be that what needs to be explained is Coreya's absence from the list as preserved.

The League came to an end when Philip of Macedon organized the mainland Greeks in the League of Corinth after his victory at Chaeirona. Interest in Philip has been stimulated by the discovery of the rich tombs at Vergina, and Militsina, Hatzopoulos and Louisa Loukopoulou present in their book not only a superb collection of photographs but a series of studies by the leading scholars who have been working on the reign of Philip. The result is an authoritative survey which deserves to be found in academic libraries as well as on philhellene's coffee-tables.

# The Greek symposion in history

By Oswyn Murray

The historian, like the farmer is never satisfied with the weather. Either there is too little evidence and his theories will not grow, or there is too much, and it lies around in stagnant pools rotting the roots of his theories and causing mildew in the ears. On the whole the Greek historian is more prone in conditions of drought than flood, and he grows his crops accordingly, dry and thin on the stony ground of chronology and political history. Those who have filled the fields of Pheidon of Argos, or harvested on the Lelantine Plain, or drunk the acid vintage of the Ionian Revolt, will know what I mean. When we do come across evidence, we refuse to believe it, or deny that it is history. Such at least are thoughts provoked by considering the subject I offer for discussion.

For it is a simple if unrecognized fact that of all the Greek social institutions known to us, more evidence exists for the *symposion* than for any other; but no one has yet stopped to ask why this should be so, or tried to order this material into an account of the Greek *symposion* in history. We may contrast the work of modern historians on the ale-houses of the seventeenth century or Victorian attitudes to drink. What I wish to do here is to outline the plan of a book on the *symposion*, or rather the mere part of a book, for no one person could presume to know all the material available for such a study. I am a historian, and will therefore leave on one side the study of the influence of the *symposion* on literature and on art, except for a few passing remarks.

For let no one underestimate the size of the problem. It would be easy enough to say that the extent of our evidence for the *symposion* is due to one man. It is true that our collections of fragments of the historians, the lyric and comic poets, and even the philosophers are stuffed with quotations from that longest *symposion* of all, which took place in Rome in the early third century, and was recorded by the Greek sophist from Naucratis in Egypt, Athenaeus, 12.231-31. The largest single storehouse of quotations from Greek authors, and inevitably imparts a symposiac flavour to whole areas of Greek culture. But Athenaeus was not the first or the last to regard the *symposion* as the organizing principle of Greek life; and the evidence of literature and of art supports his view, as we shall see.

In the course of Greek history, like any living social form, the *symposion* underwent many transformations. What I shall do is to sketch the more important of these transformations, not as a succession of historical periods (no social phenomenon has forms in this sense), but as historical forms exhibiting certainly a development and a progression in time, but also overlapping and coexisting in such a way that it is safer to talk about functions or models rather than discrete types of human activity. I want to suggest both the interrelationships of the various symposiac manifestations and the distinctiveness of the central phenomenon, which makes the *symposion* in my view a defining characteristic of Greek culture and society. In order therefore that my categories shall not be taken too seriously or my periods too chronologically, I have ordered my discourse symptomatically.

You will recall that the *symposion*, according to the best authorities, is divided into *krares* or mixing bowls: Three *krares* only do I mix for the temperate - one to health, which they empty first, the second to love and pleasure, the third to sleep. When this is drunk up wise guests go home. The fourth *krares* is ours no longer, but belongs to *hybris*; the fifth to uproar, the sixth to drunken revel, the seventh to black eyes, the eighth is the policeman's, the ninth belongs to biliousness, and the tenth to madness and hurling the furniture. (Eubulus in Athenaeus 2.36)

Unlike Eubulus' feast my *symposion* is only five *krares* long, but perhaps the discussion it is intended to provoke may be modelled on the remaining five, and exhibit the characteristics of drunken revel, black eyes, policemen and hurling the furniture.

My first *krares* then is for Homer. The Homeric feast is a well-known institution, but what I wish to emphasize is its importance as a structural element within Homeric society. There is no widespread evidence for a feudal-type society in early Greece; nor does the Homeric world display the characteristics of a society based on kinship or clan: the virtual absence of kinship terms as part of the social organization in Homer is notorious. In this situation the attracting of support from outside the family was achieved through displays of generosity, and in particular through the use of surplus agricultural produce for the feasting and entertainment of male companions (*theiainai* and *chai*). *Hetairoi* at least are normally not relatives by blood or marriage, but men attracted to the leader by ties which may indeed become hereditary, but which in origin are created by the reception of entertainment from their leader, and by the acceptance of guest friendship and guest-gifts. Of this society the *megaron* hall is the outward physical embodiment:

Eumaeus, this must surely be the fine house of Odysseus; it would be easy to recognise and pick out even among many. There are buildings on buildings, and the court is well fenced with a wall and cornice, and the double gates are well protected; no man could force it. And I see that many men are feasting within, for the smell of fat is there, and the lyre sounds, which the gods have made as companion to the feast. (Odyssey 17.246-71)

It is the function of feasting which distinguishes the house of the aristocratic *basileus*. These men feast together do so on equal terms, for to create gradations is to create enemies rather than obligations; the marks of honour are usually temporary and the result of general consent: they consist merely of special portions of food or extra wine, not the more formal and potentially permanent special seat. The feasting can also be reciprocal: Telemachus "feasts at equal feasts . . . for all invite him", according to Odysseus' mother (11.185-7); and Telemachus himself orders the suitors, "leave my halls and prepare other feasts, eating your own belongings, going in turn from house to house" (2.139-40). The suitors are in-

deed a sort of black band of *hetairoi*, out of control because their host and leader is not present, but this equality and reciprocity of feasting only serves to create a competitive society, where each noble strives through "feasts of merit" to acquire yet more *time* or influence. The relationships created in the "feast of merit" served in general to enhance the status of the noble *basileus* within the community, and in particular provided him with a band of *hetairoi* obligated to follow him in military and naval exploits, from petty cattle-raiding and piracy to accepting his leadership in more formal warfare.

It is at this point that the interests of the aristocracy and the community coincide, for it was obviously to the advantage of the community to encourage and support as powerful a military force as possible. The inter-relationship of feasting with public and private military activity is well shown in Odysseus' imaginary account of his early life on Crete. The illegitimate son of a Cretan noble, he had been cheated of his share of the inheritance, but through his valour he won a wife from a rich and aristocratic family. He became a professional warrior: "Work was not dear to me, not the care of a household, which rears fine children; but oared ships were always dear to me, and wars and well polished spears and arrows, bitter things which cause others to shudder". Nine times he had led expeditions overseas, and he grew rich. His fame was such that the people forced him to lead them to the Trojan expedition: "Nor was there any way of refusing, for the voice of the people was hard on me".

Nine years they fought. And on his return he set out again with his *hetairoi*: "Nine ships I fitted out, and the people followed swiftly; six days then my noble companions feasted with me, and I gave them many victims that they might prepare a feast for themselves." On the seventh day they set sail for Egypt and disaster. (Odyssey 14.199-258)

In peacetime the activities of the warrior elite are private, in wartime they are public and supported by the community. The expedition to Troy is envisaged as a public one; those who refused to go suffered a public flogging (11.13-60), and the feasting on the expedition was at public expense: "Dear leaders and captains of the Argives, who drink at public cost with the sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus, and each command your bands . . ." (Iliad 17.248-51; compare 4.343-6). I take it that the famous

speech of Sarpedon to Glaukos (12.110-28) refers to a more permanent version of this state of affairs: the two men are honoured first "with seats of honour and full cups in Lycia", then with quasi-divine status, and finally with a *komos*; the land is provided for the function of feasting for the people are made to say, "Our nobles that rule in Lycia are great men, they eat fat sheep and drink the best honey-sweet wine. But they are powerful men, for they fight with the first of the Lycians". It is the aspect of feasting which is emphasized throughout.

Between all these elements there is a structural relationship. The production of an agricultural surplus maintains a companionship attracted by the generosity and the personal status of the leader; his style of life and even the physical layout of his dwelling (with its Great Hall and its store-rooms at the centre) reflect the need for constant renewal of the ties of loyalty. And the warrior bands are both independent of the community and also at its service.

My second *krares* is for *Euphrosyne*. Accompaniment of the feast in Homer, one of the three Graces in Hesiod, for the archaic period she is the embodiment of the style of life espoused by the aristocracy: for Xenophanes "the *krares* is mixed with *euphrosyne*"; to Solon the nobles "know not how to restrain their excess or order their present *euphrosyne* in the quiet of the feast". In the late eighth century the military justification of the warrior elite began to be eroded with the evolution of new types of armour and tactics, which led (by cause or effect) to the emergence of the hoplite army organized by the polis. Aristocrats might still have their place within the phalanx or in the cavalry, and individual aristocrats became influential political leaders or even tyrants; but the class as a whole no longer possessed the same unity between style of life and political or military function. The effects of this can be seen most clearly in funerary customs. Warrior burials died out with the extension of the warrior group to perhaps a third or more of the citizen body; they no longer served to distinguish the aristocrat. The warrior grave of the heroic champion with its public funeral and posthumous cult gave way to the iconography and the furniture of the drinking party. The aristocracy of leisure, whose chief distinguishing mark remained the feast, but a feast transformed in style and meaning -

the *symposion*, a word significantly first found in Alcæus.

As it lost its wider social relevance, the aristocratic *symposion* developed into a refuge from the real world, a way of life aiming solely at *euphrosyne* (delight). A complex ritual of customs, prayers and practices emerged to create the standard pattern of the Greek *symposion* of classical times. Perhaps the single most important change was the adoption of the oriental custom of reclining at banquets, instead of sitting; this was in itself a sign of the acceptance of an orientating style of life, and had important consequences. It tended to limit the number of participants and increase the sense of privacy and exclusiveness. The *kline* was both banquetting couch and bier: the supreme pleasures of life were carried over into death; in the Tomb of the Diver at Paestum the dead man is portrayed reclining in state as in the east, but among his *symposiasts*, remembering the earthly pleasures of the feast:

Then he will lie in the deep-rooted earth, sharing no more in the *symposia*, and the lyre or the sweet cry of flutes. (Anon, frag. 1009 Page)

From Greek Italy the funerary customs spread to Etruria. The *andron*, the *symposion*-room, became the central focus of the aristocratic house: couches, tables and cushions reflected new standards of sophistication and new forms of eastern influence (Lydia, Egypt). The archaic age was the great age of symposiac pottery: potters and painters became rich and famous, producing shapes and painting designs which echoed the symposiac preoccupations of their aristocratic patrons. Entertainment became a central aspect of the occasion: archaic poetry in almost all its aspects (with the exception perhaps of some political elegy, and of religious choral lyric) was developed within the *symposion* - first by poets who were themselves full members of the symposiac group (Alcæus, Sappho), and later by professional symposiac poets like Anacreon. At a less sophisticated level contemporary verse, *skolia*, refrains, verse contests and other forms of verbal play abounded, whose influence persisted in later Greek poetry. There were other less intellectual pastimes, of which the game of *kottabos* is the best known. The *symposion* was male and aristocratic; women were merely slaves, dancing-girls, flute-players, an accompaniment to the wine and the song. But boys were a different matter, to be taken seriously (as Anacreon and Theognis show). It is indeed the *symposion* which, with its daytime extension the *gymnasium*, explains both the origin and the persistence of the aristocratic phenomenon of homosexuality in Greek society. In short I suggest that almost all of the most distinctive features of the high culture of archaic Greece are expressions of the symposiac way of life.

The question of diffusion is more puzzling: it is perhaps an aspect of the transference of the attitudes of the aristocracy from war to leisure, that these leisure attitudes themselves became part of the attitudes of the new warrior class. The extent to which the hoplite class took on the aristocratic style is obscure. But certainly the *symposion* itself went west with men who were not initially aristocrats, though aristocrats in the Mayflower style they very soon became: Athenaeus is insistent on the debt of the Greek *symposion* to Sicilian style and standards of luxury (the Sicilians invented *komos* for *hetairoi*); and by the fifth century it seems that the *symposion* was part of the social life of considerable sections of the hoplite class.

My third *krares* is for the polis. Perhaps the clearest evidence for the continuity of the aristocratic way of life from the Homeric world is found in the poetry of Alcæus:

The great house gleams with bronze, all the roof is well furnished with bright helmets; white horsehair plumes nod down from them, ornaments for the heads of

## Dozing

How much longer must I sit here  
Waiting for something to happen?  
The clatter of the exciting parcel  
Is only the cat nosing through her door  
In search of the relief her hardening kidneys  
Refuse, the back leg drawn slowly through the flap  
Extended behind her like a ballerina's  
Who turns and turns, without a thought,  
Through the repeated afternoons.  
She dozes on the arms of the high fender, twitching.  
Throat flattened trustfully on the padded cloth,  
Tail drooping, body slipping sideways,  
Till only her claws, which experience has anchored  
To the warm raft of her dreams, sustain her.  
And she is left hanging on like Norman Lloyd  
In Hitchcock's *Saboteur*. As she climbs back  
Her look is hurt, sleepy, resigned,  
Like an arrested drunkard.  
If I encourage her to lie on my knee  
I will never move again! The bottle is out of reach,  
The finishing cadences motionless on the turntable,  
The amplifier's hum expectantly filling the room.  
It is a moment for some truth to occur to me,  
About chance, about hope, about stubbornness,  
About how we are to face the unfaceable.  
Notions I reckon too solemn for silence,  
Too travelling for tenderness.

John Fuller



men. Bronze shining greaves hang round and hide the legs, a fence against the strong dirt. Carvings of fresh linen and hollow shields are thrown down; beside them are blades from Chalcis, beside them many a belt and tunic. These we must not forget since first we undertook this task. (Frag. 357)

On Mytilene a Homeric companion-ship, centred on the Great Hall, still existed; but this continuity disguises an important change. Alcibiades' band of *hetairoi* was no longer organized only or primarily for military exploits; it was more significantly a form of political organization in response to the emergent city-state, designed to perpetuate aristocratic control of the state against the *demoi*. The interdependence of the symposiastic and political in the poetry of Alcibiades has been emphasized by Bruno Snell in his *Dichtung und Gesellschaft*; he noted the new prevalence of symposiastic in Alcibiades and in Sophocles, emphasizing the cohesion of the group: *synodos, symmachos, symnakhos, syndyktos, symnakhos, symposion, symposia*. These are formulated and used in the context not of the community, but of the small group working against the community, whose base is in the symposiastic: the *hetaira* begins to take on its classical political form.

The political history of archaic Athens from its beginnings with the conspiracy of Kylon has usually, and I think rightly, been interpreted as played out against the background of a set of powerful aristocratic families seeking to control the state in their own interests against increasing pressure from the *demoi*; the basis of this power was destroyed or at least seriously weakened by the reforms of Kleisthenes. This basis was to part territorial and in part hereditary; in particular the aristocratic *genos* controlled the *phratry*, and through the *phratry* the state. And while there were few who believe the whole of Aristotle's claim that every *genos* was comprised of thirty men, every *phratry* or *tribe* of thirty *genoi*, and each of the four tribes of three *phratries* or *tribes* (Constitution of the Athenians Frag. 3), most have thought that *genos* and *phratry* at least were interrelated, and that the *phratry* was in some sense, as the *genos* certainly was, a kinship group.

Recent work on the *genos* and other institutions by the Frenchmen F. Bourriot and D. Roussel, however, and recent analysis of the evidence for family graves in the Kerameikos at Athens by Sally Humphreys suggest that kinship groups in general and the *genos* in particular are far less stable and less easily identifiable than we have thought, and that they are not sufficiently large, sufficiently powerful or sufficiently cohesive to provide in themselves an explanation for the aristocratic domination of Athenian political life. It is in this context that I would suggest that the *phratry*, though it clearly became a hereditary organization in some sense, was not in origin a genuine or imagined kinship group, but a development of the Homeric-style *hetaira*.

It is hard indeed to distinguish between many of the names of groups which existed in the archaic and early classical Greek world; from different states we hear of *phratries*, *syskolia*, *hetairiai*, *andria*, *phidolia*, *syskolia*, *synnakhos*, *enonakhos*, *enoi* and many others, quite apart from all those real or invented entities formed by taking an individual name and adding a *genos* designation, *Pleistokratidai*, *Alkemonidai*, *Kypselidai* and so on. It is clear that many of these names relate at least in origin to the activity of common feasting and drinking, and that to both ancient and modern commentators many are interchangeable. Ancient sources for instance saw no difference in Crete between *syskolia*, *hetairiai* and *andria*, while we happily say that the *hetairiai* of Gortyn function in the same way as the *phratries* of Athens. Juridically, I would suggest, the majority of these words designate a common phenomenon, the survival into the age of the *polis* of a pre-existing aristocratic social organization through the feast of merit.

Such groups have a tendency to ossify and become hereditary; they also have a tendency to insert themselves into the organization of the *polis*. In Athens by the end of the sixth century the *phratries* had clearly acquired the function of guaranteeing citizenship, at least for some. In

Sparta the Lycurgan *polis* adapted and systematized the same social forms to create the basis of its hoplite army. All the citizens were "equal" and equally aristocratic, in that all belonged to a military organization based on common feasts. The Herodotean account of the new Spartan army, divided into *enomotiai*, *trickades* and *syssitia* (1.65), shows clearly the origins of the Spartan army in the aristocratic world of *symposia* and sworn bands of *hetairoi*; there is no need whatsoever to suppose that this common Greek phenomenon was in some way peculiar to Dorian states.

In Athens too the *polis* behaved as if it were a Homeric *basileus*. The greatest honour the state could give was the right to dine in the state *andria*, whether once, for life, or perpetuity, as to the descendants of the Gephyraei. The whole provision of public dining rights and public dining places in cities and in cult centres shows how both the *polis* and the religious shrine adapted aristocratic customs to their own ends. But religion itself and the religious *eranos* would be a whole other *krater*, which I do not yet feel ready to mix.

"The fourth *krater* is ours no longer, but belongs to *hybris*", as Eubulus says. *Hybris* is of course not the *hybris* of high tragedy, but the normal legal term. It is a curious fact about early Greek law codes, that they often provide for special penalties for acts committed when drunk. Usually we regard such information as quaint evidence for archaic modes of thought, and the inability to distinguish voluntary from involuntary actions. It is of course nothing of the sort: when Pittakos of Mytilene ordained double fines for drunken offences, he was striking at the basis of the power of Alcibiades and his fellow-aristocrats, whose *symposia* were the half-innocent excuse for anti-social behaviour, which served to reinforce their sense of power and unity by terrorizing the innocent *demoi*: were the Pentilidai sober when they roamed the streets beating people up with clubs?

Democratic Athens took this problem seriously. Aristotle defines *hybris* thus: "Hybris is doing and saying things at which the victim incurs dis-

honour, not in order to get for oneself anything which one did not have before, but so as to get pleasure." (Rhet. 1378b). And again: "If one strikes one does not in all cases commit *hybris*, but only if it is for a purpose such as dishonouring a man or enjoying oneself." (1274a). In other words it is distinctive of *hybris* that it should be violence for its own sake, not for profit: it is a strange society that chooses to single out such behaviour as a special offence, and to treat it more seriously than criminal assault for gain. Yet in Athens *hybris* unlike other forms of assault was liable to procedure by *graphē* not *dike*; unlike other assaults an accusation could be brought by anyone, not just the victim; it was a public offence, the penalty was payable to the state, while no compensation was given to the victim; the offence could be committed against men, women and children, both slave and free.

If anyone treats with *hybris* any person, either child or woman or man, free or slave, or does anything illegal against any of those, let anyone who wishes, of those Athenians who are entitled, submit a *graphē* to the *thesmothetai*. (Demosthenes 21.47)

The *polis* was forced to legislate against these activities, because they were more than mere drunken high spirits; they were an expression of the symposiastic ethos with its disdain for the common man, the *banaios*. The mutilation of the Hermæ was not regarded as an innocent example of upper-class high spirits, and it was thought so typical of Alcibiades and his fellow-aristocrats that it focused on him the pent-up dislike of ordinary Athenians for the aristocratic symposiastic style of life. A few years later the Athenians were proved right, the drinking clubs of Athens, organized too for political ends *epi dikais kai archais*, turned to murder and introduced political assassination for the first time since Ephialtes, in order to prepare the way for the oligarchic coup of 411 ac.

It is against this sort of legal and social background that curiously much of Greek philosophy must be seen; Aristotle's discussion of voluntary and involuntary acts in *Ethics* III

for instance is much concerned with drunken acts. And it is not just the influence of Sparta that causes both Plato and Aristotle to see the *symposion* as one foundation of the state. Plato's *Lysis* begins with a discussion of the educational value of drunkenness at the *symposion*, which is defended at length – for two whole books – by the Athenian stranger. Aristotle in the *Politics* placed *koinonia* (sense of community) at the centre of political thought, and believed it could be achieved by a symposiastic organization.

The relation between philosophy and the *symposion* brings me to my fifth and final *krater*, which is for the seven wise men. The organization of knowledge and culture into a symposiastic form fascinated the Greeks from the origins of this particular symposiastic legend in the fifth century or earlier. In the hands of a mystic like Plato, the symposiastic situation could suggest the kinship of intoxication and inspiration; that whereof one could not speak in ordinary contexts could be revealed at the *symposion*: it is this which makes Plato's *Symposium* the most numinous and most difficult of all his dialogues. For others the symposiastic scene reflected merely the normal organization of academic life: poetry gave way to literary criticism at the *symposion*; those who cannot sing, croak in the golden cage of the Muses. Homeric problems, symposiastic problems, displays of erudition arranged for use at the *symposion* or as a spoof *symposion*, flourished from the fourth century ac to at least the fourth century ad: and how much of our knowledge of ancient customs and literature we owe to the extant examples of Plutarch, Aulus Gellius, Athenaeus and Macrobius.

The genre is well known, its oddity is seldom noticed. But it reflects the actual organization of culture in the Hellenistic age: kings kept scholars and paid them salaries, to set them like fighting-cocks against each other in the literary disputes of the *symposion*; Epicurus deliberately set out to shock in his treatise *On Kingship*, where he is described as "not giving a place even at drinking parties to the literary and learned discussions of scholars, but exhorting even cultured kings to submit to military stories and

coarse horseplay at *symposia* rather than talk about literary and poetic problems" (Plutarch, *Moralia* 108e). But the dominance of the intellectual *symposion* in Hellenistic culture is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that, when the Alexandrian Jewish scholars of the Letter of Aristeas attempted to persuade his Jewish readers of the impeccability of the seventy-two Jewish translators of the Pentateuch into Greek, he represented them, not as Jewish rabbis but as Greek philosophers at a banquet before King Ptolemy, solemnly answering seventy-two questions set by the king on minor ethical problems.

I hope I have said enough to demonstrate the continuity of the *symposion* from Homeric times to the Hellenistic age, and its central importance for any understanding of Greek history and culture in all periods. But when an institution as distinctive and peculiar as this survives for so long, and proves capable of undergoing so many transformations, we are bound to ask whence it derives its strength. Here, I think, the continuity which I have claimed between the archaic and the Hellenistic worlds is the important step in the argument. For if that continuity is accepted, then we have in origin a social grouping of the aristocracy with a specific military function essential to the survival of the community, and also a social grouping which is recognizable of a form known to anthropologists from many societies. In 1902 Heinrich Schurtz in his famous book *Stammesleben und Männerbünde* claimed the *Männerbund* (a word that I find impossible to translate into English except by the somewhat inappropriate "brotherhood") as one at least of the "Grundformen der Gesellschaft", basic social forms, of equal if not greater importance than the family. The opposition between *Männerbund* and family is, I believe, a valid one, and I would argue that Greek social organization is based on the *hetaira* rather than the *genos*. The *symposion* is in essence the cultural expression of that form of organization; as such, it finds its place among the Saxon and Viking halls of northern Europe and the Men's Huts of the Polynesian islands.

A full-scale treatment of Aristotle might have been expected to occupy at least two volumes. The subtitle of Volume VI, "An Encounter", is intended to signal that it does not aim at comprehensiveness. For that Guthrie refers (with admiration) to Döring's encyclopaedia *Aristoteles*. He also points out that much has already been said about Aristotle in previous volumes of the History. What he gives us here is (as he puts it) "intensely personal" – not in being eccentric or idiosyncratic, but in the choice of subjects, the proportion of space devoted to different topics, and the form and manner of exposition. One sometimes has the feeling that one is listening to a lecturer, or that one is reading a polemic treatise, or that one is reading a final text. The method is not all fully planned down, and smoothed out. This has its advantages. The personality of the author comes through, and the reader feels privileged to be in the workshop of such a cultivated and open-minded scholar.

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emphasizing as most characteristic and important: his tentative and step-by-step approach to problems, which influences his whole method of argument; his strongly empirical outlook (or "commonsense realism"); his conscious interest in logic; and his teleological outlook on the world.

Two chapters on the matter-form distinction and on potentiality and actuality give brief introductions to ideas that are to play a large part in the rest of the book. In "Abstraction and the revelation of form", Guthrie explains that Aristotle believed in the existence but not in the transcendence of specific and generic forms: he held not that there are Platonic Forms existing apart from this world, but that there are changeless principles capable of being thought of separately. Common features, which exist in things, and he modestly, can be "regarded in abstraction from them by the mind".

In discussion of these matters Guthrie does not seem to draw a sufficiently clear distinction between two different, though no doubt related, questions. One question is about the nature and status of universals in general (common properties); the other is about natural kinds in particular (substance species). Plato's one-over-many argument for Forms is addressed to the first question. Aristotle with his deep interest in biology is interested also, and perhaps even more, in the second. Corresponding to these two questions are two senses in which forms may be said to be unchangeable. Every universal, it may be held, is immune from change in that universals are not possible subjects

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The chapter on potentiality and actuality is useful and interesting, though it does not go far towards answering two central questions which it raises. What *more* does it mean to say that an acorn is potentially an oak than that it will (under certain circumstances) grow into an oak? How exactly are we to decide which natural processes are "orderly progress" (movement towards, not away from, perfection), once we exclude the idea of deliberation and conscious purpose in nature?

The *Organon* was probably not Guthrie's favourite reading, but his discussion of logic and dialectic will be found lucid and helpful to the student. However, to say that Aristotle's logic is "an analysis of the actual processes of thought", "the mind's study of its own workings", is surely to misdescribe his great achievement in inventing *formal* logic, which is not a branch of psychology. Guthrie touches on interesting questions about scientific definition, but does not push them far. In his treatment of the *Topics* he is rather hard on dialectic, giving it too little credit as the servant of philosophy and underestimating the importance of dialectical method in Aristotle's own philosophy.

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## The life of reason

By J. L. Ackrill

W. K. C. GUTHRIE:  
A History of Greek Philosophy  
Volume VI. Aristotle. An Encounter  
456pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£30.  
0 521 23573 1

This is to be the final volume in the late W. K. C. Guthrie's history of Greek philosophy, the completion of a task (undertaken nearly a quarter of a century ago) which called for exceptional determination and stamina as well as exceptional intellectual gifts. In the preface to the first volume Guthrie listed the qualities and powers which the ideal writer of a large-scale history of Greek philosophy would need, and he modestly disclaimed their possession. He has in fact displayed them in large measure. Moreover, his history has been free of the two commonest weaknesses of multi-volumed professional treatises, dullness and dogmatism: he has always been interesting, and he has always kept the argument open and made it clear that the truth is difficult to discover. A final conspicuous feature of the History is its good temper: Guthrie is appreciative of the work of others, and courteous even when in strong disagreement.

Guthrie's original intention was to carry his History on into the post-Aristotelian period. His regret at having to abandon this intention was tempered by the thought that Aristotle is, for him, "both the last of the ancient and the first of the modern philosophers". In any case, much new work is in progress on Hellenistic philosophy; and it may well be more appropriate for this to be reported on by several writers – as in the volumes planned by the Cambridge University Press – than for it to be summed up by one.

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